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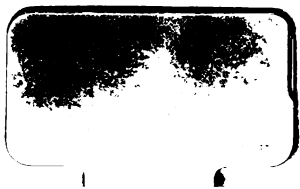
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# THE HARRISES



# THE HARRISES

BEING

AN EXTRACT FROM THE COMMONPLACE-BOOK OF  
ALEXANDER SMITH, THE ELDER

"We see the very wreck that we must suffer;  
And unavoided is the danger now,  
For suffering so the causes of our wreck."

—RICHARD II.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.



LONDON

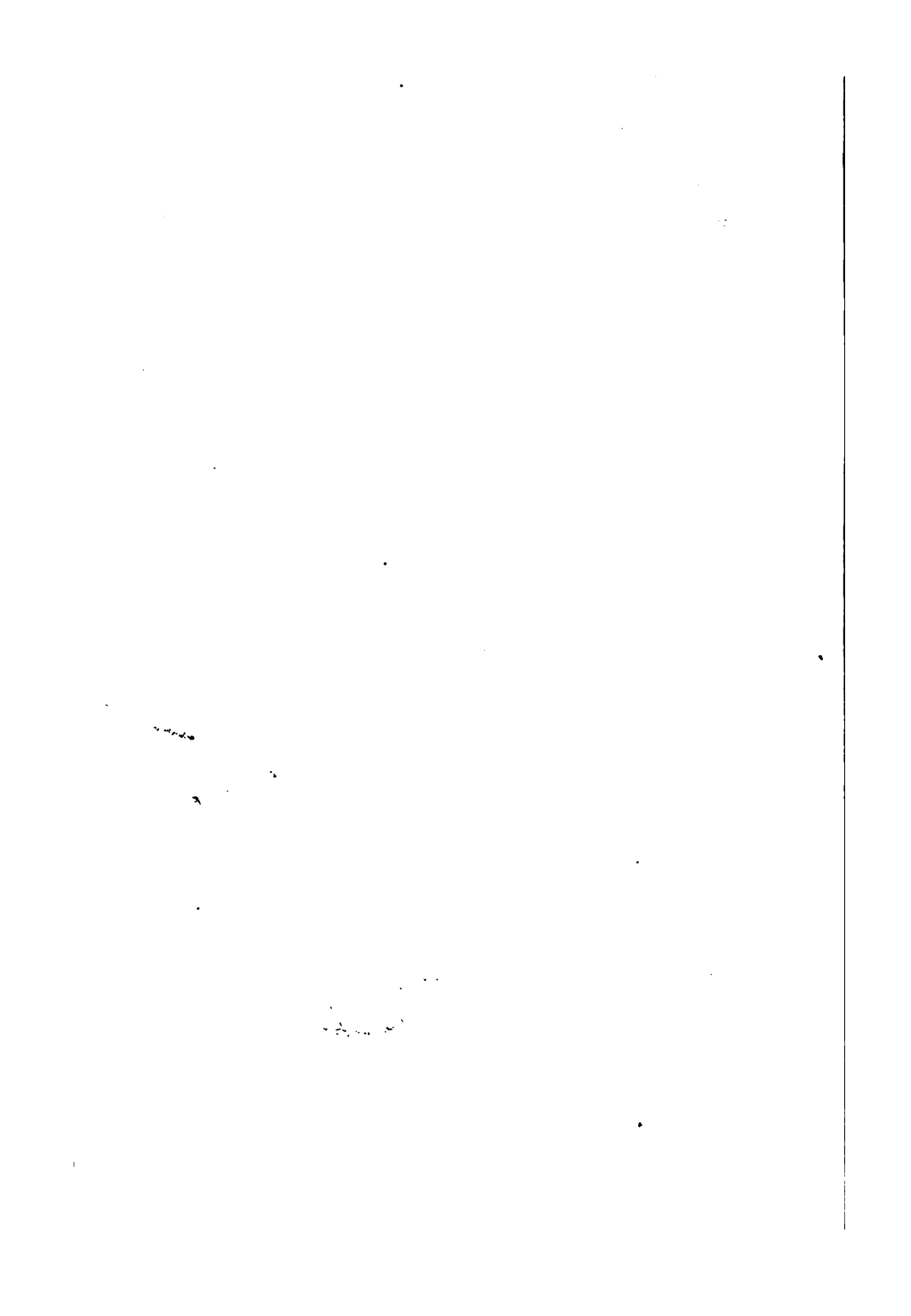
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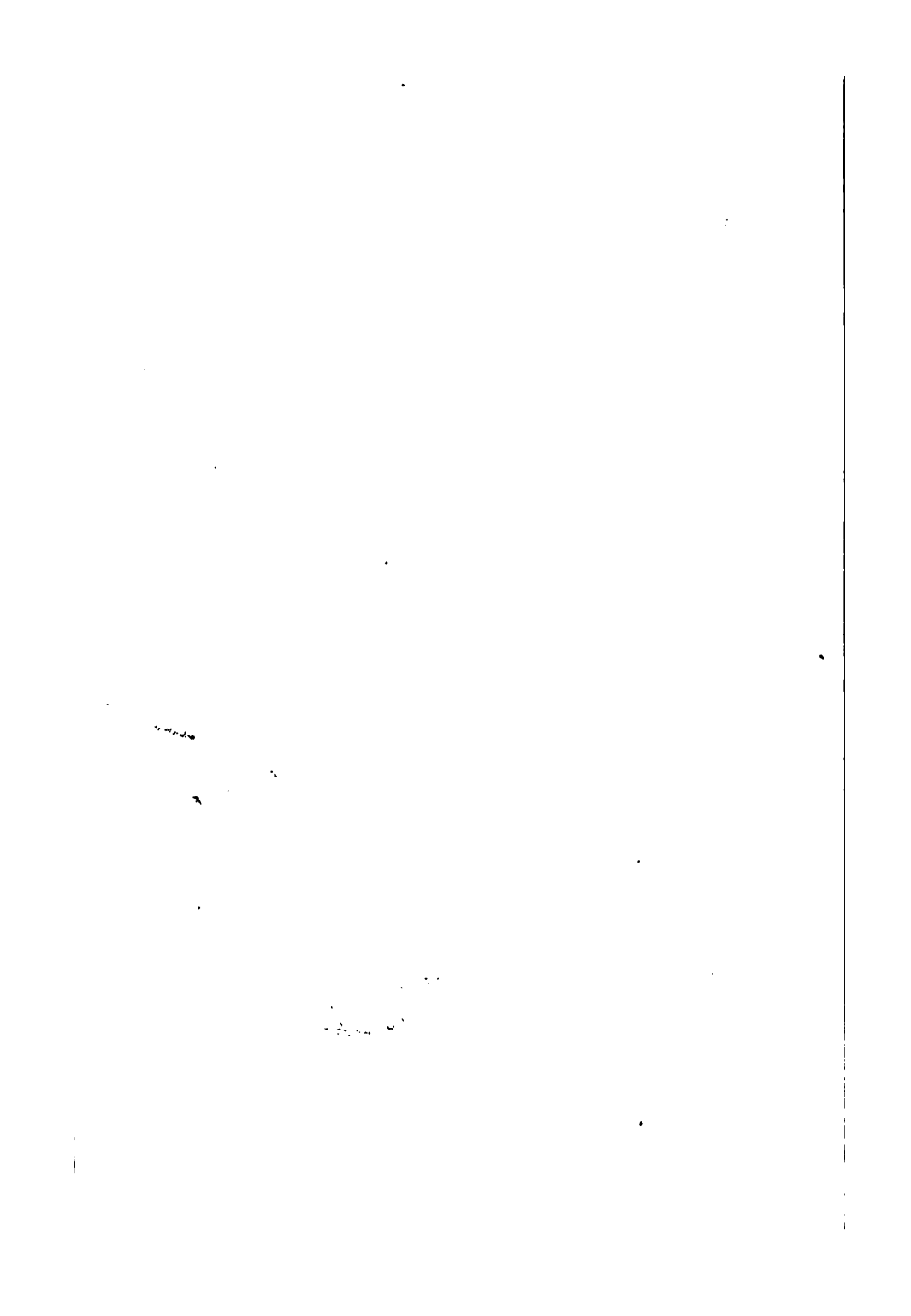
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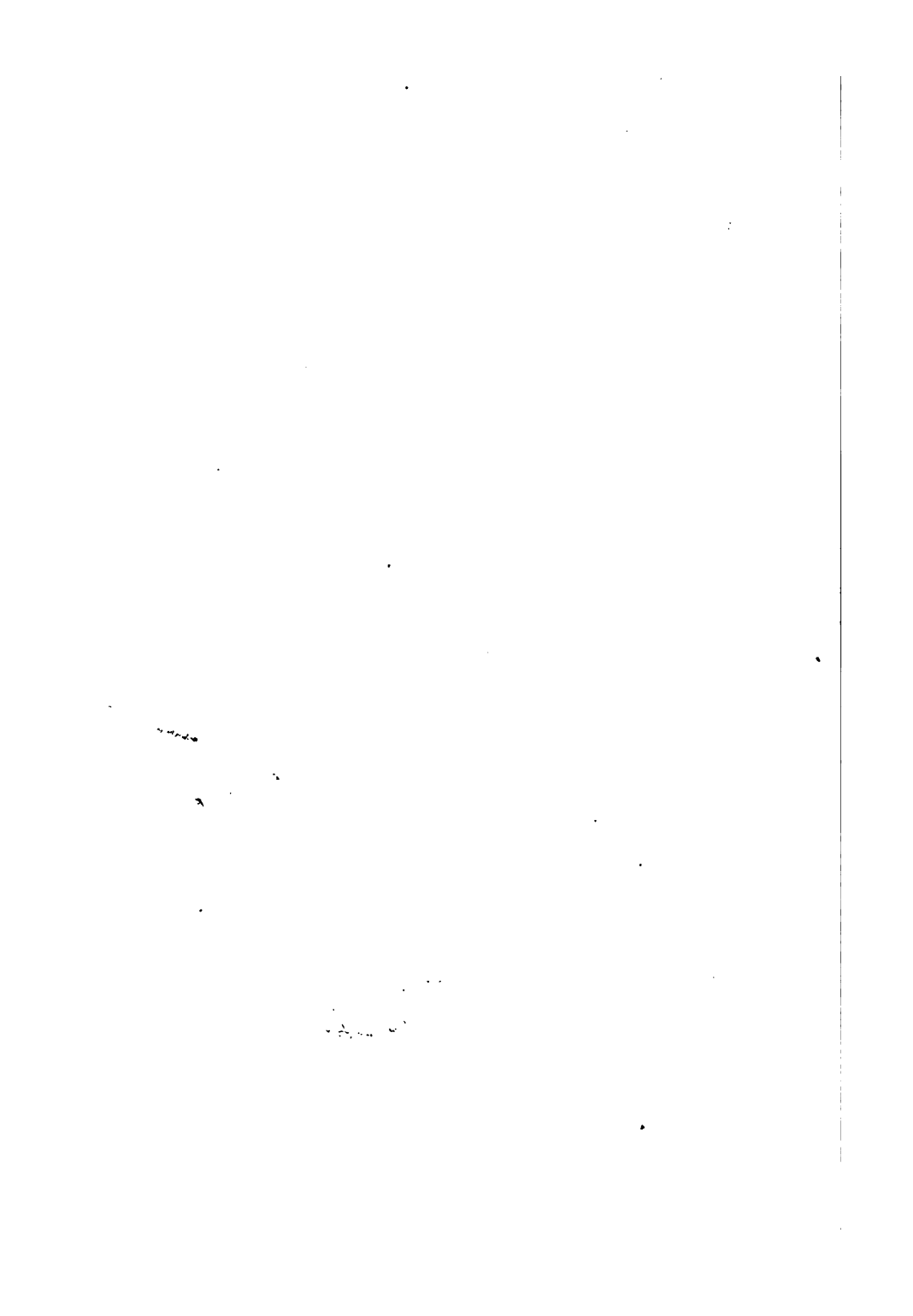




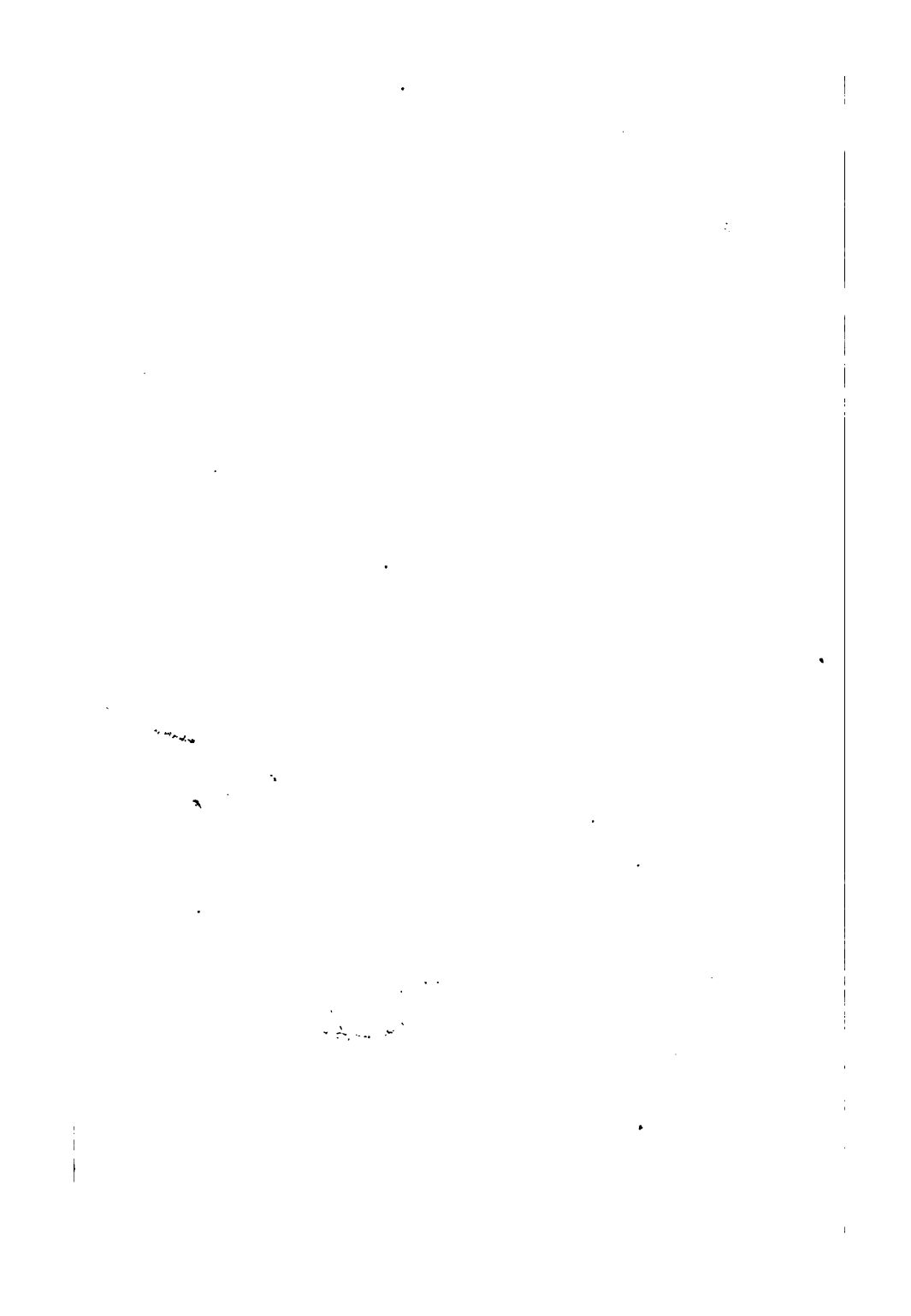
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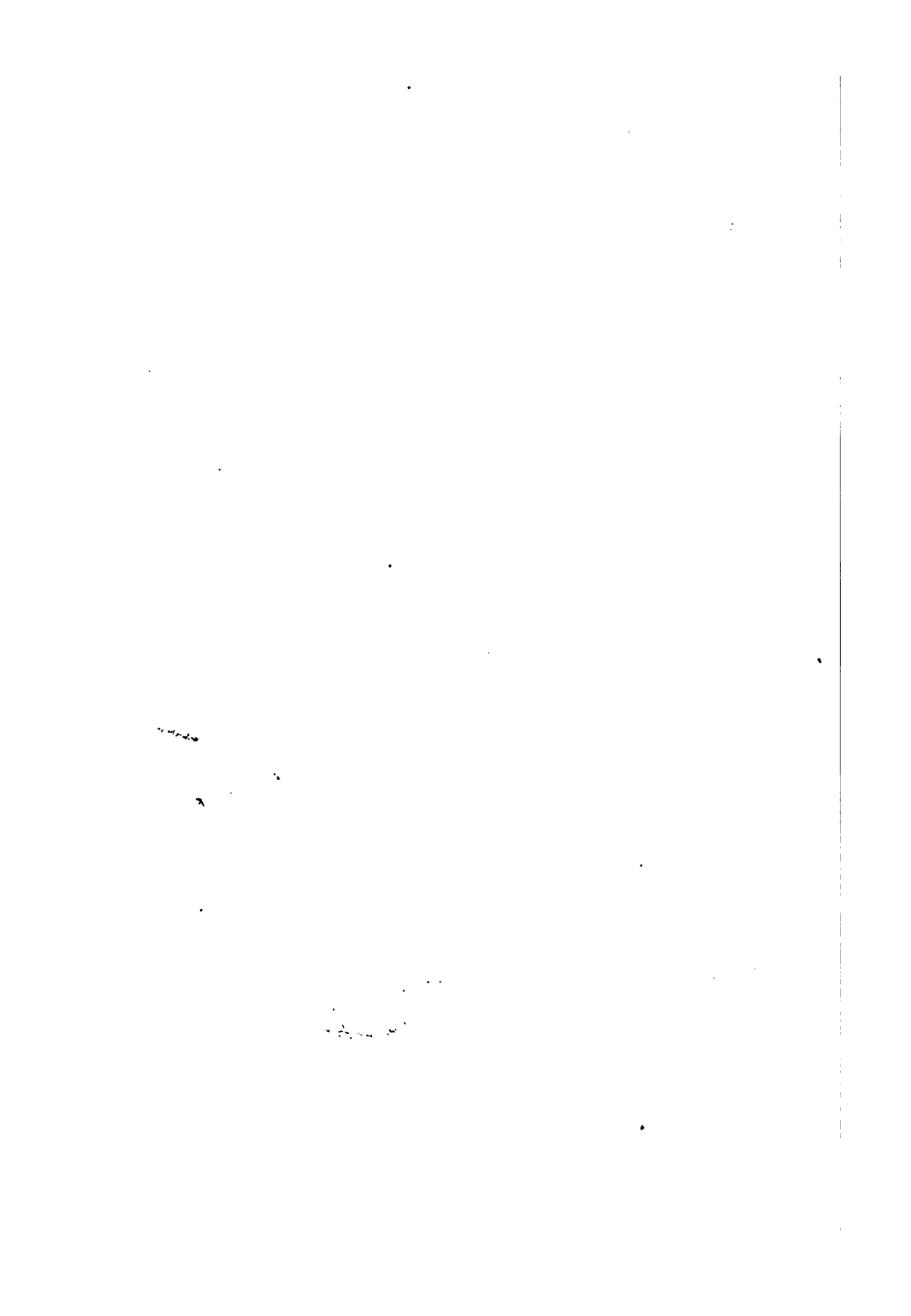


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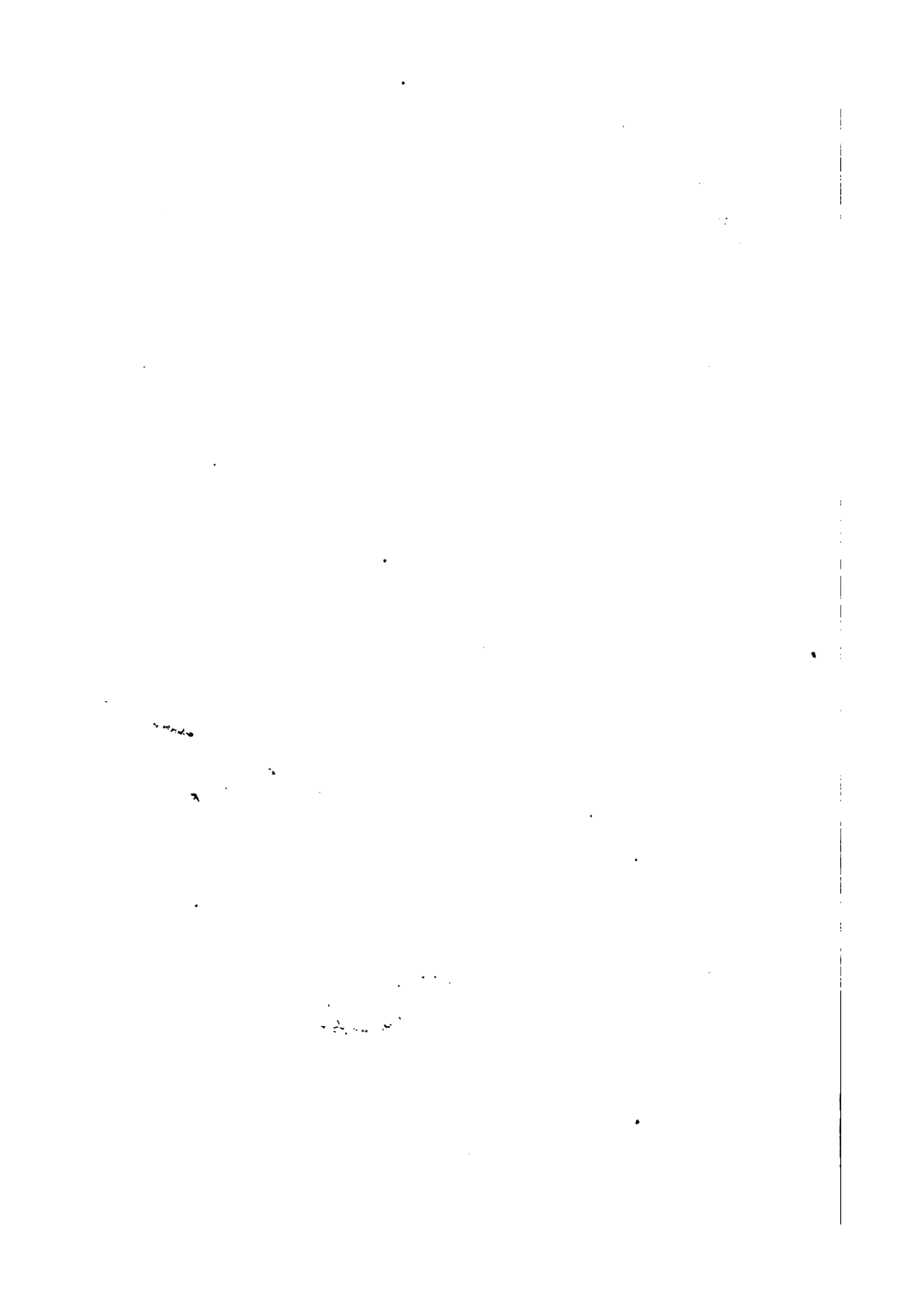
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## **BOOK SECOND**



# THE HARRISES.

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## BOOK SECOND.

### CHAPTER I.

#### GATHERING UP.

TEN years have run their course since the drop-scene fell upon our drama—a large space in the life of the individual man, a not inconsiderable one in that of nations. When the curtain rises again, we see that great changes have occurred in the interval. Boys are grown to manhood ; young men are beginning to feel the first approaches of age ; older persons of both sexes look themselves in the glass and discover that there are more ugly wrinkles about the eyes than used to be there—that

their locks are thinner, and seem to have a decided tendency to grow white. The outer world, also, has in many respects changed its aspect. The everlasting hills remain, indeed, such as they seem to have been from the beginning, and onwards to the sea the rivers continue to pour their waters, perpetually changing, yet for ever the same. But in other respects, so far as this our own dear England is concerned, the eye takes in new sights, and the ear new sounds. The fields are better cultivated than they used to be ; the roads are prodigiously improved ; your light coach will travel now, with less strain upon the springs and less labour to the horses, twice as fast in the hour, and almost twice as far as it used to do before the century began. Manufactures, also, have received a vast impulse from novel inventions in machinery, and villages are in consequence enlarged into towns, and towns into enormous cities. There is greater life, greater energy, greater bustle in the whole nation, than had ever been seen or heard of within the memory of man ; yet

England, which, when last we watched the course of some of the events connected with her social history, was just preparing to look a great war fairly in the face, was now in the thick of it. She had sustained some reverses ; she had achieved some triumphs, and was putting forth her strength in the hope of achieving more. Her fleets rode triumphant on every ocean ; and her armies, well commanded at last, besides establishing and enlarging her vast Indian dominions, and giving her the most widespread colonial empire the world has ever seen, looked down from behind the lines of Torres Vedras on a baffled enemy. It was a great war, involving heavy taxation, and making huge demands upon both the moral and physical resources of the country, yet the country seemed to thrive under it. Gold was scarce and silver was dear, but one-pound notes supplied the place of both ; and if there were poverty and suffering, as there doubtless were—as there doubtless must be in every land till the millennium come—at least they did not obtrude themselves offensively on pub-



lic notice ; they were borne in silence. For every man who had strength to work, and cared to work, was sure to find employment. Royal dockyards were thronged ; royal arsenals rang with the noise of ceaseless labour ; our mercantile marine commanded the carrying trade of the world ; our colonial produce made its way, by clever smuggling, into all Christian markets ; our royal navy manned itself, fully and freely, through the instrumentality of the pressgang ; and a numerous and well-disciplined militia, raised by the ballot, served the twofold purpose of a very efficient defence against invasion from abroad, and the best possible feeder to the regular army.

Never was England, in one sense of the expression, more prosperous than at the beginning of the second decade in the present century ; never, in another, did she appear more bent on rushing forward into absolute ruin. For there was no lack of borrowing in those days ; no stint of spending among the public authorities, great and small. While the Chan-

cellor of the Exchequer added yearly to a national debt, already gigantic, that he might scatter the money, so procured, broadcast over Europe — subsidising foreign powers which usually failed him in the hour of need,—the overseers of parishes put a premium on improvident marriages, by giving out of the poor-rates so many shillings every week to every man who made it appear that he was the father of more than a specified number of children. What then? Who suffered? Nobody! We speak of times when wheat was selling at a hundred or a hundred and ten shillings per quarter; when beef and mutton fetched in the public market from a shilling to eighteenpence a pound; when landlords asked what they would for their farms, and got it; when farmers drank their port-wine and rode the best of hunters in the field; when the ordinary wage of the hedger and ditcher, over and above his parish allowances, nowhere fell short of fifteen shillings a-week; when our Arkwrights, and Peels, and Boltons

and other giants of their class, were keeping whole counties in full employ, and amassing at the same time colossal fortunes for themselves ! Were not those prosperous days ? Ask the old men who remember them, and they will answer, "Yea, verily." Ask Mr Mill and other authorities in the science of political economy, and they will shake their heads. Which of the two is right, which wrong, we shall not now stop to determine, having other fish to fry.

Ten years had wrought a change, as everywhere else, so on the *dramatis personæ* of this our narrative ; and yet they had been, on the whole, to most of these, marked by no very striking incidents. Lord and Lady Belmore were become wellnigh fixtures at Baddlesmere. She rarely visited London ; he never—never except once or twice, when business of importance took him there. Their domestic life resembled nothing more nearly than that of the poet-laureate's Lotus-eaters. They rose late ; they breakfasted, sometimes together, some-

times apart, at uncertain hours ; they betook themselves to their separate rooms, read books and newspapers, wrote letters, walked, rode, or drove out, met again at dinner, and parted for the night usually about ten o'clock. For her there was no occupation whatever beyond this ; and for him, only such as his farm-accounts, his woodman's operations, the requirements of his preserves and of his gamekeepers, imposed upon him. For though a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant, he never showed himself either at the lieutenancy meetings or on the bench ; and of the parish and its affairs he took no account. It seemed, indeed, as if whatever vigour of character originally belonged to him had evaporated quite. He was gentle to his wife, kind to his dependants and domestics, a liberal landlord, an open-handed benefactor to all who made an appeal to his compassion ; but he did it all as if there were nothing in life which could interest him for a moment. Even the arrival at home of his sons, first from school, and by-and-by from

college, scarcely roused him out of his habitual apathy. He was glad for their sakes if the game proved abundant at Christmas-time. He mounted them both admirably, and listened to their account of finds, runs, checks, and so forth ; but he never accompanied them to the hunting-field, and very rarely took his gun to shoot with them, even within the park-palings. His great desire seemed to be, to be left alone in that private sitting-room next to his chamber, where, long long ago, Mr Brackenbury and he had held consultation together. The very tones of his voice seemed gradually to change, and laughter was with him of the rarest possible occurrence. How was it with her ?

At first Lady Belmore exhibited at Baddlesmere a good deal of the temperament which she had displayed of late in and about Belmore House. She arrived at her place of destination satisfied that there was a mystery to the bottom of which it behoved her to penetrate. She watched her lord's going out and coming

in with the keenest scrutiny. She made excursions to all the villages, and solitary cottages, and farmhouses within a circle of miles, and returned from each palpably disappointed. She kept up a frequent correspondence with Mr Thompson ; which, however, brought her, to all appearance, no consolation. The mystery was before her, and round about her, as dense and impenetrable as ever. Now no mind can be kept thus for ever on the stretch without one or other of two results ensuing. Either the intellect will give way, intense anxiety degenerating into madness ; or the mind will get accustomed to its burden, and in the end cease to be fretted by it. Months—we might have said years—flew past, before the latter of these contingencies came to pass in this case ; and when it did come to pass, the results were not happy. So long as she had an object to live for, Lady Belmore faced the difficulties of her position bravely. She had few friends in the country. Not one of all the ladies round about, from the lord-lieu-

tenant's lady down to the wife of the vicar of her own parish, so much as called upon her. The vicar himself occasionally sought an interview with her husband ; and when he happened to meet herself in her drives, he pulled off his hat to her. But as neither she nor Lord Belmore ever went to church, no opportunity was afforded of trying whether even this slight mark of recognition would be extended to her by any other member of the vicar's family. All this, however, she bore for a while, not so much with equanimity as with an air of arrogant defiance. And the better to show that she was independent of rustic civility, she filled her house from time to time with company from London : poets, painters, authors, authoresses, wits, singers, and actors of both sexes, who readily accepted her invitations to Baddlesmere, just as they had accepted and made the most of them at Belmore House. Gatherings of this sort could not occur, however, except occasionally and at long intervals. They were very charming while they lasted,

and served, as her sons grew up towards manhood, to give them—at least she so believed—a taste for higher pleasures than rude country sports. But, like our pleasant dreams, they were, from the nature of things, mere interludes in her existence ; which was, in truth, as stagnant and dull as the existence of a rational creature can well be.

“I shall grow into a turnip or a cabbage,” she would say, from time to time, to herself. “I shall lose the power of enjoying anything, even the very consciousness of existence.” And so, more or less, she did. The woman whom we saw presiding over the “feast of reason and the flow of soul,” ere yet the century was well begun, had degenerated, before it entered into its second decade, into a mere automaton. Even the gossip of Louise ceased to amuse her. Even the insinuations of her power to bring all men to her feet, gave her no more pleasure. Her correspondence with Mr Thompson himself grew slack, and gradually died out. She seemed to have nothing more to hope for



or desire, unless it were that her sons might be with her—and that not always.

Meanwhile Mr Thompson himself was faring very much as a gentleman in his peculiar situation might be expected to do. He lived chiefly in the library of Belmore House ; not, however, being always occupied in arranging the books, or compiling the catalogue. On the side table in his lordship's sanctum the desk continued to stand—her attempt to penetrate into the mysteries of which had been the proximate cause of his intimacy with Lady Belmore. He had managed to secrete it, when the process of packing went on, and restored it to its proper place as soon as the coast was clear. It was his habit every day to unlock that desk, and to place beside himself, on the writing-table, so that it might meet his eye as often as it rose from the paper, that same miniature the discovery of which had so deeply and strangely affected its original. How he gazed upon it ! how he worshipped it ! how he spoke to it ! And yet, poor man ! the thought was never absent from

his mind—"It is all idle ; it is all useless. She cares nothing for me : she never can, she never will." What of that ? He could still care for her ; still be her slave, her guardian, her avenger. Ay ! her avenger. Her avenger, first, on the scoundrel who had dared, in his sight, to offer outrage to one who was to him as a divinity ; and, next, should her suspicions and his own ever be confirmed, on a husband who so little merited the blessing which had fallen to his share. How he set about both operations, and with what measure of success, it will be our business by-and-by to relate. For the present, it may suffice to state that every day saw him busy about something or another of which he considered it necessary the same night or the following morning to make a record. Extracts from the journals he kept were despatched twice a-week to Baddlesmere ; and the letters acknowledging the safe arrival of the packets, whether they suggested new courses of action or approved the old, were to him the bread of

life. They were the only scriptures he ever read, and he read them continually.

And how fared it all this while with M. de Couvré and Mrs Todd ? In one sense of the expression indifferently well ; in another, sadly enough. M. de Couvré felt himself at all events free from the anxieties which are inseparable from a state of destitution, actual or imminent. From whatever source his annuity might come, it was paid into Gordon's Bank with commendable punctuality. His personal expenses—we mean the cost of his clothing, food, and lodging, were moderate even to parsimony. He would not hear of being moved into a better apartment. He lived so sparingly that his kind-hearted landlady, after vainly remonstrating, took it upon herself, without consulting him, to add occasional morsels of beef or mutton to the diet of bread, coffee, and vegetables which he seemed to prefer. And, curiously enough, he always ate what was set before him without stopping to inquire why it was there. As to his apparel, it seemed to be of the same nature

with that which is vulgarly supposed to have sufficed for each individual in an ancient nation through forty long years, growing with his growth and strengthening with his strength. Yet there was a mode in which he spent his money freely. Once always, sometimes twice, a-week he would go to the theatre, now directing his steps towards one house, now visiting another, till all the servants and *habitués* of each, not less than the actors and musicians in the orchestra, became familiar with his appearance. It seemed, too, as if not a few of them got an inkling of his story: at all events a particular place in the pit, just far enough removed from the stage to give him the command of the whole house, seemed to be regarded as his, for even if it happened to be filled when M. de Couvré came in, the occupant, either on his own motion or instigated so to do by others, invariably gave it up and went elsewhere. And you might have heard more than one voice say, "There comes the poor old man again. Let him have his own seat, whether any good come

of it or no." Alas! no good came of it. Night after night he renewed his search, night after night he searched in vain. Yet night after night he went forth again, sustained by the hope, which no measure of disappointment was weighty enough to smother, that he should succeed in the end.

"She was not there, Madam Todd. I could not see her. And yet I saw everything and everybody that was in the house."

"No, Mounseer, you didn't, nor you won't. Better let things be, and try to make your mind easy. If she ever come back it will be of her own accord. It's no use your spending your money, and wearing out your strength, looking for her there."

"Why so, Madam Todd? What would you have me do? You yourself once saw something that gave you hope. Why should not I see what shall prove to be a certainty?"

"Yes, yes, that was long ago, and what I saw only put them on their guard. Neither you nor I will ever see the like again, that you may depend upon."

So argued the worthy woman, but all in vain. So likewise reasoned his friend Father Jerome, who came more frequently to visit him now that he was bereaved, than he had done while as yet he lived upon his niece's earnings. For the Father was a stern uncompromising believer, who accepted the dogma of his Church which pronounces actors and public singers to be excommunicate, and whom not even the plea of necessity could reconcile to the fact that a Catholic lady had so far forgotten herself as to go upon the stage as a public singer. Neither Mrs Todd's arguments, however, nor the remonstrances of the priest, produced the smallest effect upon M. de Couvré. He was as sure as he could be of anything in the future, that sooner or later he would discover his darling, and that he would find her in the theatre. To the theatre he therefore went, as we have shown.

Of the residue of our acquaintances a few words will suffice to say at this stage in our history all that is required. Mr Hogarth rose

from day to day in eminence. He became by-and-by too great a man to live in lodgings. He gave up Mrs Todd's first floor, much to her regret, and established himself in a house of his own in Clarges Street. Mrs Todd would have willingly made over her drawing-room and its appurtenances to M. de Couvré, but she could not prevail upon him to take them. She therefore let the lodgings to another tenant, who is for the present a stranger to us. As to the poets and the authoress whom we last met at Lady Belmore's table, they ran the course which ladies and gentlemen of their class usually do. Our friend of the Death's-head was a man of good private fortune. His success in letters, therefore, and it was great, ministered less to his needs than to his self-complacence. He became every day more biting, more censorious, more amusing, his words being like sharp swords, his acts generous and noble. Malone continued to write for the press, now exquisite lyrics, now an indifferent story, now a history, which everybody read but nobody pretended to rely upon ;

and not unfrequently a satire or squib, of which princes, nobles, and men of lowlier rank were the objects. Fraser's performances, as well personal as intellectual, were more eccentric. His poetry was often magnificent, always far above the average ; his prose, of the prose, prosy. He edited a magazine. He gave his name to books which other people wrote. He took to strong potations. Yet he was an honourable man, and if not unfrequently behindhand in his accounts, to the most exact point punctual in getting them square in the end. He did not, however, like Malone, rise in society. On the contrary, he fell. Our lady friend, on the other hand, the brilliant Mrs O'Hagan, managed to play her cards very successfully. People bought her books, courted her society, frequented her *salons*—made, in short, a great deal of her. It would scarcely become us to say that all this public approval was misplaced. It is certain that she thrived upon it.



## CHAPTER II.

### NEW IDEAS.

WE have not included in our general survey of things past any notice of Lord Belmore's two sons. They deserve to be noticed apart. The last thing we heard of them was, that they were to be conducted on a certain day by Mr Thompson to Eton, and there placed under the charge of the Rev. Mark Brackenbury. To Eton they went, and Mr Brackenbury, junior, took charge of them. They were not, on the whole, particularly amiable boys. They were not well grounded : they were not conspicuously clever. The elder had perhaps more talent than the younger, but in every other respect he was much his brother's in-

ferior. Charles, the younger, besides being scrupulously truthful, was good-natured, obliging, cheerful, and generous. He was always ready to do a good turn to others, when he became intimate with them, and willing to be pleased if a good turn were done to him. George, the elder, would not tell a direct lie, but he could fence with the truth if it suited his convenience so to do. Proud, captious, indifferent to the feelings of others, sensitive of any slight or the appearance of a slight offered to himself, he never made a friend ; he disgusted even acquaintances. And yet the latter result did not always appear at first. If it suited his purpose, he could make his way with any one, and often did. But the ground thus gained he lost by little and little, till in the end he became generally obnoxious. His brother was more slow to achieve a footing among strangers, for he too was proud, and pride took with him the aspect of reserve ; but when the ice was fairly broken, his companions found that he was a capi-

tal fellow. And both boys were physically brave.

For the first two or three years after going to Eton, their holidays were intervals of great enjoyment to these two boys. They made friends at school, and easily obtained permission to invite them to Baddlesmere. It surprised them to find that not all to whom they proposed a participation in the hospitalities of their home accepted the invitation. Some did, however—chiefly the sons of nameless squires and country clergymen—fine fellows in their way, but not quite belonging to the aristocracy. What care boys about such artificial distinctions as these, however. John Brown, Willie Green, Dick Robinson, were just as good company on the river or by the cover-side, as if they had been Curzons, or Howards, or Lascelleses, and they received from Lady Belmore in-doors just as much of kindness as she would have showered on so many Cavendishes or Fitz-Walters.

The aspect of affairs changed a little in these

respects as the boys approached to manhood. It began to strike them as curious, when they came home from Christ-Church, whether at Christmas, or Easter, or for the long vacation, that nobody came to see their father or mother except occasional batches of visitors from London.

"I say, mamma," asked George, who was on this occasion the more outspoken of the two, "how is it that you cultivate none of our neighbours? The Devereuxes, young Freeman, Lefevre, and Jim Cox of the vicarage, are all in the same set with us, and we're the best friends in the world at Oxford. But we never see anything of them when we come home. How is it that you never ask Lord and Lady Villars, or Sir Patrick Freeman, or Mr Lefevre, or even Mr Cox the vicar, to meet your London friends, or to stay at the house, or to shoot with us when we're alone?"

"My dear, your father, as you must see, is not what he once was. He hates entertaining strangers. I have some difficulty in persuad-

ing him to receive the very people with whom he used to be most intimate when we spent our time chiefly in London. He won't hear of asking his country neighbours to the house. He says he never would be without them. They very naturally resent this, and now keep aloof from us."

"But surely, mother," put in Charley, "he needn't extend that rule to the vicarage. Mr Cox and he seem to be excellent friends when they do meet; and a better fellow than young Cox doesn't live. I wish you would urge him to break through his rule in favour of the Coxes."

"Well, you see, he doesn't go to church, and I am never able to go, neither. I don't think the Coxes would come to visit people who don't go to church."

"And why don't both you and papa go to church, mamma?" persevered Mr Charley. "It seems to me that you're bound, for the sake of example, to show yourselves there, at all events occasionally. You can't wonder if

the Coxes are hurt. You can't expect them to come here if you never go there."

"They've not been asked to come here. Mr Cox has not had the civility to call upon me, though this has been, I may say, our constant residence these seven years. Why should I try to make a friend of a person who behaves so rudely to me?"

"Have you called upon her, mother?" asked George.

"No; it was her business to call first upon me."

"I don't agree with you. Lady Belmore puts herself in a false position if she waits for the vicar's wife to originate civilities with her."

"Lady Belmore is better able to judge for herself, in such matters, than you or anybody else."

So saying, my lady rose and quitted the drawing-room. She quitted it with a pang at her heart more acute in its own way than she had experienced on any previous occasion. For the first time, as it seemed, the enormity

of her offence against society rose up in judgment against her. She had inflicted a great injury, not upon herself only, but upon her children. Hitherto she had flattered herself that these being boys would never have forced upon them the bitter reflection that their mother was an outcast. On this account, indeed, she taught herself to rejoice in the fact that she had no daughter, though it was a hard lesson to learn. And probably, but for the unlooked-for determination of her husband to spend the rest of his days in the country, her expectations might have been fulfilled. For in London young men soon make their own circles, independently of those within which their parents move ; but in the country, social position, like the patronymic, is hereditary. It was now made manifest to her, by a process at once humiliating and distressing, that through her a blight had fallen even on her sons. What could she do to remove it ? How should she act ? She betook herself, as her wont was when anything unusual occurred to pain her,

to the privacy of her own boudoir ; there she sat down to think, and her thoughts ran somewhat in this channel :—

“ It’s no use looking back on what is inevitable. My first lapse may have been a mistake. Late events have pretty well forced this conviction upon me ; for, though baffled in all my attempts to get at the truth, I no more doubt that there is a truth, humiliating to me to get at, than I doubt my own existence. Yet, oh me ! oh me !—were it all to do again I could not but do it. Have I acted judiciously since ? The world declared war against me. I knew that it would when I defied its conventionalities. Was it wise, was it becoming, to pay back scorn with scorn ? What if I had taken a humbler attitude from the outset ? What if I should take a humbler attitude now ? Can I bring myself to stoop before them—before people who would have given their ears to be noticed by me twenty years ago—before my Lady Freeman, before Mrs Lefevre, before the vicar’s vulgar wife ? Can I ?—can I ? For



my own sake? no. For the sake of these boys? ye-e-e-s—perhaps. But how, and with what chances of success? I can't begin all at once a new order of life. I haven't darkened the door of the church since we came down. If I made my appearance in the pew next Sunday the people would drive me out again by their astounded staring. I can't go over to the vicarage and call; the servants would say their mistress was not at home, though I saw her looking at me from behind her own window-blind. Is there any other mode of proceeding? Yes, there is. It may fail, but it's worth trying, for no harm can come of it."

It took a much longer time for Lady Belmore to think all this out than for us to put the substance of her reasoning on paper. When she returned, therefore, to the drawing-room, bent on putting her scheme into operation, she found the place empty. The boys had taken their rods (it was the beginning of the long vacation), and were gone out to try the river for trout. She put on her bonnet and shawl, and

having ascertained the direction in which they had gone, she walked out to follow them. The park, the woods, the stream, were in great beauty. It was a day—one of the earliest in June—when its exquisite spring hue still adheres to the leaf; when the primroses and cowslips still enamel the meadows, and every bower and brake rings with the melody of birds. A pleasant breeze fanned her cheek, and over the face of the sky, banks of clouds, such as the angler delights to see travelling there, went and came. She walked on, and by-and-by at a bend in the stream, just where the water, breaking over a weir, first rushes downwards, sparkling and foaming, and by-and-by settles into a deep quiet pool, she saw her sons at their sport. One had taken the top, the other the bottom of that pool; but both, when her eye fell upon them, were standing idle. A third youth appeared to have come out, not to join them, for he was on the opposite bank, but to chat with them. He carried no rod: and she at once recognised in him the son of the vicar, Mr

Cox. Her ladyship was not displeased at the recognition ; on the contrary, it seemed to be agreeable to her, for she made straight for the bottom of the pool opposite to where the youth was standing and bowed to him—a salute which he acknowledged by raising his hat.

“Don’t you fish, Mr Cox ?” she said. “I’m sure Lord Belmore will be delighted to make you free of the river.”

“I’m very much obliged,” replied the young man. “I do fish when I go to my uncle’s. There’s no sport I like better.”

“Then, pray, go and get your rod. And if you’ll come home with the boys and dine afterwards we shall be very glad to see you.”

“Do as you are desired, Cox !” shouted Charley, who happened to be his *vis-à-vis*. “Away with you and get your rod, and send your things for dressing up to the house. Mother,” he continued, as young Cox scampered off, too happy to accept the pleasant invitation, “you’re a trump ! It was the very thing George and I wanted you or papa to do.

I tell you that's a capital fellow, and we'll be all the better of him to break in upon our monotony. Couldn't you extend your invitation to his sisters? They're very nice-looking girls, I assure you."

"One thing at a time, Charley. I'm sure I shall be very happy if we can strike up a visiting acquaintance with these people for your sakes. But we must see how your father receives one before we ask any more of them to the house."

George had by this time joined the little conclave, and, though disposed at first to demur to the general command of the river which had been conceded to his college friend, he was too well pleased with the dinner-invitation which had accompanied it to make much of the concession. Their mother left them, therefore, to pursue their sport in high good-humour; and in their good-humour, as she followed the homeward path, she almost unconsciously participated. She had achieved a considerable victory over herself: and of

all imaginable means of getting into good-humour, there is not one more efficacious than the thought that we have subdued some personal prejudice, and done what was right, even if it be but a trifle. A thought of this sort is, moreover, for the most part, the parent of others akin to itself. For example, Lady Belmore was walking on, gladdened by the reflection that she had mastered her own pride in order to gratify her sons, when a labouring man passed her, taking off his hat as he did so. She must have seen him thousands of times before, because he was regularly employed about the gardens; but up to that moment she had not only never spoken to him, but was unconscious of his existence. She now noticed that he looked delicate, and stopped him to say so.

"I've had a bad cough these six months back, my lady; but I'm in hopes, now the summer's come in, that I'll get better."

"Where do you live, my man, and what's your name?"

"I lives down by yonder, ahint the Grange coppice, and my name's Turner, my lady—Joseph Turner."

"Have you a family, Turner?"

"Yes, my lady; I've two sons and three daughters, asides the old woman and myself; and the eldest, the doctor says, is in a decline."

"Have you had anything for her and for yourself from the house?"

"No, my lady. Wedidn't like to intrude. The vicar's been very kind to us, and so has Mrs Cox."

"Is your house far from this?"

"No, my lady. It's just outside the gate there—round the corner of the wood."

"I should like to see your invalid, Turner. Do you mind my going with you?"

"Oh no, my lady. It's very good in you. My wife'll be proud and happy to see you, and so will poor Bess."

Lady Belmore turned round and walked

side by side with Turner, chatting to him kindly and considerately. He led her through the gate, the people at the lodge rushing out to make their courtesies, and to look with astonishment on a sight which they had never seen before. He led her round the elbow of a coppice, and conducted her towards a cottage which stood, with a small but neatly-kept garden in front of it, about a stone's-throw from the edge of the wood. On a bench at the door, screened by the house from the light breeze that blew, sat a young woman, apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age, on whose hollow cheek tokens of an early deliverance from the burthen of the flesh were registered. The bright blue eye, the hectic flush, the fair hair, lank and moist, which was braided across that brow, all told a tale of consumption set in ; and the hacking cough, with difficulty of utterance in the speech, evidenced how surely and rapidly it was doing its work.

“Is this your sick daughter, Turner?” said

Lady Belmore. "Pray sit still, my dear ; don't think of rising."

"This is she, my lady ; and though I say it that shouldn't say it, no man ever had a better daughter. She's too good, my lady, for this world, and so her Father is calling her early home. How be you to-day, Bess, my lass ?"

All this was said so frankly, so entirely without the pretence either of too much feeling or of indifference, that Lady Belmore was greatly moved by it. Nor was she less struck by the quiet self-possessed manner of the sick woman's mother, and by the exceeding neatness and cleanliness of the cottage into which she was ushered. It was in obedience to the most natural of all impulses that she put her hand into her pocket, pulled out her purse, and offered the poor man a one-pound note.

"That's a great deal of money, my lady. We don't need it. I'm in steady work in my lord's garden, and the boys earn summut. All we need is a few comforts for Bess, and



the vicar's lady—God bless her!—doesn't let her want."

"Take it, Turner—take it; you're most heartily welcome. I'm ashamed to think that I haven't found you out long ago. Whatever Bessy requires, she shall have from the house. I'll come and see you again before long."

Lady Belmore turned away as she said this, her eyes so blinded with tears that she hardly noticed the expression of respectful gratitude which lighted up the countenances of Turner and his wife as they wished her good-day. She walked on, perfectly astounded at the change which appeared to have come over herself. It seemed as if a fountain, heretofore sealed, in her inner nature had burst its bounds. Her heart yearned to do these poor people good. She forgot her own cares, her own anxieties, her own misdoings, in the contemplation, not so much of what she had just seen and heard, as of something higher and better which she could not understand. Her very manner, when she reached home, was

changed towards every one. She sent for the housekeeper, told her of the cottage beside the wood, and desired her to take care that the invalid there had a share of whatever was most inviting to the appetite.

"I'll attend to your ladyship's orders," replied Mrs Jones. "I'm glad your ladyship has begun the only work that never tires us. The Lord be praised!"

"Thank you, Jones," answered Lady Belmore, not only not offended, as once upon a time she certainly would have been, by the housekeeper's somewhat familiar address, but positively gratified by it. "I'm sure there are plenty more in the parish that need looking after, and you and I will try to do something for them."

There had not been such an agreeable evening in Baddlesmere as that for years past. Young Cox came to dinner. He was delighted with the motherly attentions of his hostess, as much as she was pleased with his modesty and good-humour. The two boys, as she called them,

were in boisterous spirits, and even Lord Belmore's countenance lighted up from time to time with an expression to which it had long been strange. So much for a successful battle waged against self. So much for a new range of thought, wide enough to take in the requirements and even the feelings of others.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHURCH.

LADY BELMORE'S character appeared to have undergone a great change. She was at the cottage beside the Grange coppice next day an hour before noon, bringing with her a basket laden with good things for Bessy ; and others of her poor neighbours soon began to benefit, not less than the Turners, from the new impulse that was upon her. She found out sickness and poverty wherever they prevailed, and made it her business to relieve them, sometimes extravagantly. Her equipage, as it rolled along the lanes and roads, was no longer an object of idle curiosity to the villagers. It stopped, now at this tenement,

now at that, my lady getting out to say kind words and do kind things to the inmates. And the greetings which met her in return—out of doors as well as in, from old and young, from men as well as from women—had a warmth in them which at first she could not understand, but which, when she did understand it, more than repaid her for all her trouble. But to one farther step in the same direction she found it as yet impossible to bring herself. She could not go to church. Sunday returned, and on the soft west wind the peal of the Sabbath-bells came up—bidding her to prayer. She heard it, recognised its purpose, felt a strange fluttering at her heart that was new to her, yet sat still. Her sons entered the boudoir, better dressed than was their wont on other days, each with his hat in his hand.

“ Won’t you come with us, mother ? ” said Charley ; “ we’re going to church. Jones and several of the servants are going too. Look out and you’ll see them. By Jove ! won’t the

vicar just stare when he sees the Baddlesmere seats filled! Now do come, mother—there's a good soul!"

"Not to-day, Charley; I have a great many letters to write. Somehow I get into arrear with my correspondence now, and if I let another day pass I shall never be able to overtake it. But I'm glad you're going. Is your father going too?"

"No, I don't think so. But why don't you come? You know it's only shyness that keeps you away. You don't like to make a beginning. Do try."

"Not now, Charley—not now; next Sunday, perhaps, if nothing come in the way to prevent it; but not now."

"I tell you what, mother," said George, "you do yourself no good, nor us neither, by holding aloof as you have hitherto done from all but the by no means most respectable portion of London society. People must believe that you've some reason for what you do—and it can't be a good reason."

"Let me go my own way, George, will you?" replied his mother, something of the old leaven beginning to work within her again. "I'll go to church when it suits me: I'll stay away when I please. You are free to follow your own course; be so good as leave me equally free to follow mine."

"Very well, do as you like; but, egad! I shall begin to think that there's really some stain upon us. Not one of the fellows has either come to see us or asked us to go and see them; and when one meets them they're cordial enough, but they don't introduce one to their mothers and sisters. This must be your fault, mother. It can't be ours."

"Whosever fault it may be," replied Lady Belmore, rising, "it is not likely to be corrected by continuing this conversation. If you're going to church you'd better go at once. You'll be late else."

The young men took the hint, and quitted their mother's apartment — the elder very angry, the younger disappointed and sorrow-

ful. They went to church, arriving after the service had begun, and attracting thereby more notice to themselves than would have otherwise been given to them. For the family-pew was one of those unsightly boxes which were not uncommon in our country churches sixty years ago ; a sort of room enclosed within four high walls of antique oak—with its separate fireplace, its table and chairs—all hidden from the vulgar gaze of the congregation ; and seen only from the tall pulpit, which dominated over every portion of the church. Had they penetrated to that stronghold while yet the people were assembling, few, comparatively, might have noticed them. As it was, their advance was watched by some hundreds of eyes all the way from the porch up the aisle, and onward to the lofty door, which an obsequious beadle made haste to open for them. Not that they cared for this, or even thought at all about it, yet it had, in its consequences, some effect upon the current of our narrative too. As from other quarters, so from the vicar's seat,



the progress of the brothers towards the Baddlesmere pew was noticed, and young Cox, after the service was over, waited to greet them at the church-door. He did more. He invited them to the vicarage—an invitation which the vicar himself, coming up as the discussion went on, repeated and enforced. They went to the vicarage: they were kindly received by Mrs Cox and her two daughters; and, to the great delight of the younger, and somewhat to the surprise of both, their mother's recent acts of benevolence in the parish were spoken of with generous approval. The lads returned home well pleased with all that they had seen and heard; and her ladyship, the tale being repeated to her, was well pleased also.

Throughout the whole of that week, Lady Belmore pursued with unslackening zeal her career of benevolence. She made more than one attempt to coax her lord to be her companion in her visits to the poor, but Lord Belmore resisted the suggestion, though not unkindly. On the contrary, he expressed himself

pleased that her ladyship should have found such a praiseworthy source of interest, and charged her not to stint her gifts wherever they might seem to be required. He himself, however, would rather not be seen in such matters. Charity was a woman's work—strict justice men were called upon to dispense. Besides, he had too much to do; he could not spare the time. She was sorry, but did not press him; neither did she allow his refusal to affect, injuriously, her own proceedings. And so the week wore on.

Another Sunday came. Like the last it was a day of bright sunshine, with not a cloud upon the face of the sky; and again, over wood and dell, the sound of the Sabbath-bells floated. Their notes spoke to her, on this occasion, as they had never spoken before. Their tone was not one of unmitigated reproach. It called up thoughts, which, as they first rose, rose bitterly, but which, by slow degrees, melted into the sorrow that comforts even while it wounds. She was alone, as we for-

merly found her, in her own room, sitting beside her writing-table, and without, as it seemed, having made any preparation to go elsewhere. She rose, walked towards the window, saw little groups of men and women moving from various directions towards the village, and before she knew what she was about, became conscious that tears were making furrows in her cheeks. "I'll do it—I'll do it!" she exclaimed aloud; "I'll do it while the feeling is fresh!" and hurrying towards her dressing-room, she first effaced the traces of weeping, then rang the bell and ordered her cloak and bonnet to be brought.

"Is your ladyship going out so early," asked Louise, in some surprise, bringing, however, the articles required at the same time.

"Yes, Louise," replied Lady Belmore, quietly; "I'm going to church."

"To church, my lady! Well, I'm sure, it's a very good thing to go to church. I've often wondered——"

"I think you had better come with me,

Louise," observed Lady Belmore, interrupting her. "We've both of us neglected that duty too long. We may as well make a fresh start together."

She said this with just so much of lightness in her tone as was calculated, she thought, to make the girl understand that she was not about to run into extremes. For it was a period in English history when what was then called Methodism—what is now better understood by extreme Low-Churchism—was beginning, not an hour too soon, to make its influence felt on society. Wesley and Whitfield were both dead, and their followers, cast out by a Church which lacked the skill to utilise them, had gone to swell the list of Dissent, already too extensive. But Simeon, and other lights of the so-called Evangelical school, were entering, heart and soul, on what they believed to be their great work. Now Lady Belmore, though conscious of an impulse within—which, whether it were consolatory or not, seemed to be carrying her, she scarcely knew

whither—was by no means disposed to cast in her lot, as yet, with those who proclaimed, perhaps too ostentatiously, that they were dead to the world. Let us, however, do her full justice. No thought of re-establishing a place for herself in society had the smallest effect in making her what she had become. No. The first victory achieved over false pride, the first step taken towards right, was taken with a view to benefit her sons. Self entered into the considerations which led to it—no, not at all; and as little was self the principle of action which carried her to Turner's cottage, and from Turner's cottage to other places, where her presence was greeted as that of a ministering angel. So also the desire to be present "in the great congregation" which took possession of her now, was as far removed from possible dreams of social benefit to herself, either immediate or remote, as east is removed from west. Whence came it, then—what motive induced it? We cannot pretend to say. All that we know on the subject is this—that, checking in

Louise the disposition to wonder and expostulate, while at the same time she guarded herself against appearing to be under the influence of the "new light," she put on the cloak and bonnet which her waiting-woman brought, and, descending to the hall, desired her to let the young gentlemen know that she was ready for church. In a moment they were beside her: the elder to remonstrate, as was his wont, against everything which he might not himself have suggested; the younger to express his unbounded delight that his mother was at length acting like a reasonable woman.

"I say, mother," was George's appeal, "do you want the whole parish to know that you've become converted? By Jove! I expect to see you soon on the top of a tub, and all the villagers gathered round you."

"Never mind what he says, mother," put in Charley; "he's only joking, and a very poor joke it is. I'm so glad you're going. Come along—take my arm. Let's walk together."

"Oh yes—take his arm. March on! Egad!

the very servants are laughing at you. I'll be hanged if I go to church to-day !”

“Don't say that, George,” replied his mother. “I'm only doing to-day what you urged me to do last Sunday, and reproached me for not doing.”

“I know nothing about that. I only know that what with your visits to the poor, and what with this sudden zeal for church-going, you'll become the talk of the whole countryside ; and I for one don't want to be considered one of the ‘new light,’ nor yet the son of a ‘new light.’”

• Lady Belmore was hurt. She had a perfect right to be so, but she suppressed all display of wounded feeling. She contented herself with good-humouredly chaffing her eldest son on the facility with which he could change his views of subjects ; and putting her arm through that of his brother, set off with him in the direction of the village. They reached their destination before the bells ceased, but not before the churchyard had become pretty well

filled with farmers and labouring men, waiting, as their custom was, till the service should have fairly begun before taking their places in the church itself. Lady Belmore had often faced in early life, without flinching, gatherings of the noblest and proudest in the land. The presence of royalty itself had never caused her pulse to intermit, or to beat by one throb more irregularly than usual. She felt to-day, as she walked through that rustic throng, every member of which respectfully saluted her, as if her limbs would refuse to support her. She knew nothing of either what she was herself about, or whither her son was guiding her. And when at last she found herself within that high-walled box, which till to-day she had never entered, and of which she had never so much as heard a description, she threw herself instinctively upon her knees ; and hiding her face in her hands, with her head bowed upon the bottom of a chair, she wept convulsively.



## CHAPTER IV.

### THE THAW SETS IN.

LADY BELMORE went through the service, she never could tell how. She remembered afterwards no more of what occurred than this, that she had placed herself as much as possible under cover of the pew-wall, and changed her position instinctively, from time to time, as others did. That she prayed intensely, that she knew well ; but it was rather with the waves of unexpressed thought that passed through her own mind, than in the words of the liturgy. As to the sermon, all she had heard of that was the cadence of the vicar's voice, for not one articulate word was she sufficiently mistress of herself to take in. At its close she con-

tinued on her knees long after the rest of the congregation had risen ; and lifted her head at last, when the stillness which prevailed around advertised her that the building was empty. Then she rose, to find her son Charles standing near, without seeking to interrupt her, and looking upon her with an expression in his countenance of deep sympathy not undashed by surprise. They passed out of the church quietly together, and made their way quietly back to Baddlesmere. The rest of that day was spent by her ladyship in entire seclusion. She never left her own room till the dinner-bell rang ; and both at table and afterwards bore herself like one whom some incident had befallen, of power enough to preoccupy and solemnise her whole nature.

Lady Belmore's change of habits—for what we have just described soon became habitual with her—produced a wonderful effect, not only on her own household, but throughout, first the parish, and then the more remote neighbourhood. The Baddlesmere tenantry

who, following the example of their betters, had exhibited perfect indifference to public worship, became wonderfully regular in their attendance at church. Mrs Jones, with her friends Bruce and Ford, might be seen twice there every Sunday ; and not unfrequently a small dissenting chapel at the outskirts of the village, where the worthy Mr Growler of the Baptist persuasion held forth, enticed them into a third attendance on what she called "the ordinances," later in the evening. The tenantry and labourers on the estate caught the infection, and church and chapel became both of them better filled than any one recollected that they had been, either in the present lord's time or in his father's. Meanwhile the inner soul of the vicarage was stirred, and family councils were called to consider how it behoved persons in their responsible position to act under such an unexpected change of circumstances.

"Yes, my dear, if you were anything but what you are, there could perhaps be no room

for hesitation. As a private gentleman's wife, you might be bound to mark your condemnation of what she has done to the bitter end ; but the wife of the vicar of her own parish is differently situated. How can we draw lessons from the Magdalene's history, or tell how once upon a time it was said, 'Neither do I condemn thee : go and sin no more,' if we put from us one who manifests such evident tokens of a change of heart ? No, Lucy, it seems to me that you will not only not compromise yourself or the girls by calling upon her, but that you will do the thing that is right in the sight of man as well as God."

"Well, Richard, you know I am always willing to act as you recommend ; only it does strike me that if Lady Belmore were a real penitent, she would cease to live with a man who is not, in point of fact, her husband. What if all this were put on, in the hope of getting, sooner or later, a fresh footing in society ? Do you think it would be right in me, as your wife, to do anything

that was likely to promote such an unworthy object?"

"Is there anything in her mode of doing things which leads you to this rather harsh judgment? I'm sure that less ostentation never was displayed by living creature. You can't see her in church—I can; and I declare it made my heart bleed to witness the depth of her agony, the first Sunday she came to morning service. She would have hidden herself even from me if she could, but she couldn't."

"Your account of her behaviour quite touched me. I don't doubt that she feels her position very much; but why does she continue to live with Lord Belmore? She's not his wife in the sight of God and the Church, whatever she may be in the sight of the law."

"Lucy, Lucy, don't be too severe upon her. What would you have her do? We have no convents in our Reformed Church into which penitents such as she may retire, and the more's the pity. Besides, she has a family. Would you have her leave her sons, too—break up

their home, and force upon them unnecessarily the conviction that their mother was a disgrace to them?"

An appeal to the feelings of children is usually irresistible with mothers; and on the present occasion it had its customary effect. Mrs Cox's scruples gave way; and the same day she proceeded to do what she had never done before—what only a fortnight or three weeks previously she had never calculated on doing—to call on Lady Belmore. The servant who answered the bell looked astonished. He thought her ladyship was at home—he wasn't quite sure; but he would inquire. Her ladyship was at home; and Mrs Cox, after a very brief delay, was ushered into the drawing-room. Lady Belmore advanced to meet her visitor, slightly agitated, but with all the grace and dignity that were natural to her. There was no affectation in her manner of condescending to be polite to an inferior—quite otherwise; neither was it tainted by that show of extreme humility which, circumstanced as she was, a

woman less accustomed to self-reliance might have found some difficulty in concealing. The ladies sat down together upon the same sofa, and chatted freely and kindly on parish matters and other such topics as occurred to them. By-and-by Mrs Cox rose to take her leave, and then Lady Belmore suffered nature to have its way. Her eyes filled as she pressed Mrs Cox's hand, and thanked her for the visit. The vicar's wife was, in her turn, greatly moved. At last the conviction seemed to come home to her that it was possible for even a married woman to err and to become repentant; and she returned the pressure of this new Magdalen's hand, determined that by her no hindrance should be thrown in the way of a perfect return to purity and peace.

It happened that the two young men were abroad when this visit took place. They returned not long afterwards, and seeing a card on the hall-table—a spectacle quite unprecedented in that place—George took it up. It

bore the inscription, "The Rev. Richard Cox, Vicarage, Baddlesmere."

"Holloa!" exclaimed the elder of the brothers, "here's a go! The vicar seems to have broken out in a fresh place. His visits here used to be on business; now he leaves his card. What does it mean, Bruce?"

The house-steward, to whom this question was addressed, replied by saying that Mrs Cox had left it on the table as she went out.

"Mrs Cox!" cried George. "Was Mrs Cox here?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bruce; "she was here for a good half-hour, and hasn't been gone more than twenty minutes at the most."

"And what the deuce brought her here?" demanded the young man.

"I'm sure I can't say, sir, unless it was to call upon my lady."

"To call upon my lady! The devil take her impudence! I say, Charley, we can't stand this. I hope my mother has not been fool enough to treat her civilly."



"I hope my mother has had the good sense and the good feeling to let the vicar's wife see that she was glad to make her personal acquaintance."

"That's your game, is it? By George! it's not mine! Mother," he continued, as the two lads, throwing open the drawing-room door, confronted Lady Belmore, "what has Mrs Cox been doing here? what did she come for?"

"She came to call upon me, George. I thought you wished to be on good terms with the people at the vicarage? I'm sure I do, for your sakes; and therefore I'm very glad she has broken the ice at last."

"Broken the ice! She break the ice! By heavens! mother, I don't know what's come to you of late! After holding yourself aloof from these people for eighteen or twenty years, you are suddenly overwhelmed with gratitude to the vicar's wife for calling upon you. I should have thought that if a move of this kind was to be made at all, it ought to have come from you."

“ You forget, George, that Mrs Cox has been longer in the parish and neighbourhood than I, and that, for many years, your father and I made it publicly known that we didn’t wish to be on visiting terms with any of our country neighbours.”

“ And the better reason there is, if you have changed your minds now, that you should make the first advances to them, and especially to the parson and his brood.”

“ You forget to whom you are speaking, George, and of whom you speak,” interposed his brother. “ My mother has a right to act as she pleases ; and the good folks at the vicarage scarcely deserve to be sneered at. You were glad enough when young Cox was invited to the house and accepted the invitation. For my part, I shall be still better pleased to see them all here, and to dine with them at the vicarage in return.”

“ You can do as you like ; but I mean to put it to my father whether he approves of all this condescension—for, by Jove ! I don’t.”

"You don't know what you're speaking about, George," interposed Lady Belmore, her naturally fiery spirit lighting up. "You don't know what you propose to do. I tell you that I am very much pleased with Mrs Cox, and intend to return her visit to-morrow. If we've lived all these years for ourselves only, is that any reason why we should not begin to live now for other people also?"

"Then why don't you go and call upon the rest of your neighbours—the Devereuxes, the Villarses, the Freemans, the Lefevres? they are all within an easy drive of you. Are you going to wait till they break the ice too? for if you do, it strikes me that you'll have to wait some time."

"I wish you'd learn to command your temper, George, or at all events not to let it loose when you're speaking to my mother. What has she done to deserve this harshness?"

"What has she done! Egad! I don't know what she's done. I only know that through her, or my father, or both, society turns its

back on you and me—on me, at all events, for you, with your humbugging ways, get round people. I don't."

"George, George, why will you say things intended to wound me? Why do you reproach your brother as if he were in some plot against you? Whatever treatment society may dispense to your father and me, it's our own seeking. The world will be glad enough to receive you and Charley if you only make yourselves agreeable to it. Don't you mean to go to the Assize ball next Thursday?"

"If you will go too, mother," put in Charley. "Do come! It would be so nice to see you in your proper place; and you might chaperone the Cox girls. Their mother won't go, Jim tells me, and his sisters are dying to get somebody to take them. They've never been to a ball yet. Do come and be their chaperone."

A dark cloud passed over Lady Belmore's countenance. Her younger son's appeal, far more keenly than his brother's rudeness, shot through her like a spear, and opened wounds

afresh which, under the influence of altered habits of life, had begun to skin over.

"I can't go to county balls, Charley," she said, abruptly and bitterly. "I should know no one there. The Cox girls could not be in worse hands than mine. Pray tell them," she continued, regaining her assumed calmness, "that it's so long since I've gone anywhere of the kind, that I should not be able to find my way to the Assembly Rooms at Winchester, and if I got there, would be a stranger among strangers. The Freemans, I'm sure, will be glad to take charge of them."

"Will you suggest this when you return Mrs Cox's call, mother?"

"I don't think that would do, Charley. It would be like putting off on somebody else what I didn't care to undertake myself. If anybody makes the suggestion, why should not you or George?"

"I!" exclaimed George; "I'll do nothing of the sort. I'm not sure that I'll go myself; and whether I go or not, I'm sure it's a matter

of the most perfect indifference to me whether the Miss Coxes come out on that occasion or stay at home. Do you mean to return Mrs Cox's call?"

"To be sure I do ; and why not?"

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ASSIZE BALL.

LADY BELMORE was as good as her word. She returned Mrs Cox's call, was well received, made the acquaintance of the vicar's daughters, and took to them kindly. They were just such girls as may be found any day in the best of our English parsonages : sufficiently good-looking to pass muster ; quiet, ladylike, and self-possessed in manner. They did a great deal of good, in an unpretending way, among the poor, and were perfectly presentable in any circle ; but we are sorry to be obliged to add that neither of them was a genius. The gift of genius is not, however, indispensable on either side to create, between young people of the

opposite sexes who are thrown much together, first a liking, if their tastes and habits happen to agree, and then feelings warmer and more tender, such as either settle down into true and lasting affection, or pass away according as circumstances may in after-life direct. Lady Belmore, whose altered manner of life had in no degree blunted her womanly perceptions, was not slow to discover, as the intimacy between the great house and the vicarage grew more close, that her son Charley preferred Lucy, the younger and prettier of the Miss Coxes, to her elder sister; and that Lucy's bright blue eyes never shone so brightly, nor her ringing laugh sounded so musical, as when Charley and she chanced to be engaged in a two-handed conversation. They were very young, however: Charley being as yet a month or two short of completing his nineteenth year—she still under seventeen. The danger, therefore, if danger it was to be considered, did not appear to Lady Belmore to be very imminent. But did she so think of what was passing



before her? Not wholly, nor yet wholly otherwise. She thought, as she watched the young people without appearing to be on the alert—certainly without saying or doing anything to make them feel that they were watched—of her own past life; of what it was, of what it might have been, had the heart spoken when the hand was given away. And while these dreams remained in the ascendant all her impulses went in unison with theirs. Let them be happy in their own way. What are rank, station, wealth, influence, but so many possible accessories to happiness? They are not happiness itself, nor even the means to it. They are often the very reverse, if, in order to attain or to keep them, we sacrifice the purest affections of our nature, or act as if these had no existence. Let them be happy in their own way. Better far that he should bring home a bride, humbly born it may be, yet loving, than tie himself for life to one who valued him only for the place which he secured for her in society. On the other hand, that pride of station which,

if we may not speak of it as natural, is at all events a common, perhaps an excusable, weakness among all aristocracies, revolted even in Lady Belmore against what she could not but look upon as a *mésalliance*. What would the world say if she connived at the growth of a permanent attachment between Lord Belmore's son and the daughter of a country clergyman not known beyond the limits of his own parish? Would not this further degradation to a noble family be attributed to his connection with her, which had cut off his children from seeking alliances in their own proper sphere, and had thrown them for all their intimacies on their inferiors? She must not inflict this fresh wrong upon her lord. No. She would keep her eyes open—perhaps put her son on his guard; or if this course should appear on consideration injudicious, suggest to his father the propriety of sending both the boys from home. She kept her eyes open. She did not reason with her son, but she advised her husband consequently upon events which, though they came to her at

second-hand, appeared of sufficient importance to justify the proceeding. The events were these :—

On the night appointed, the Assize ball was held at Winchester. The Miss Coxes found a chaperone in their neighbour, Lady Freeman. The two Harrises, not being invited to join the party, went by themselves. They entered the room, representatives of a peerage, not, indeed, the oldest in the county, but of a century and a half's standing, all but strangers to the company. Among the young men present, including the vicar's son, several were of their set at Christ-Church, and these, one after another, made up to them and gave them a greeting. But the elder branches of the county families, as well as their daughters and nieces, looked at them with that stare of mere curiosity which ladies and gentlemen in well-defined positions are apt to cast upon those whom, being unacquainted with them, they regard as interlopers. Both the young men felt the anomalous nature of their posi-

tion,—the elder very acutely. There even passed through his mind a sort of hesitating impulse to withdraw from it ere it should become intolerable. But his pride bore him over that temptation, and he stood where young Devereux had spoken to him, a few paces removed from the door. The younger, discovering the Miss Coxes on a bench opposite, made towards them, and engaged Lucy, much to her delight, to be his partner in the first dance. He then returned to his brother, and urged him to do a similar act of kindness by the elder Miss Cox, but George refused.

“You may act as you please. You are a younger son. The parson’s daughter is a fit enough subject for you to make your first appearance in public with; but you must excuse me if I decline to follow suit.”

“You hold your head pretty high, George. I hope you feel the better for it.”

“You can’t be charged with an error of the kind, at any rate, if it be an error.”

The brothers might have come to higher

words, for both were angry, had not young Lefevre approached them at that moment.

"Do you mean to dance, Charley? Because, if you do, I shall be happy to introduce you to my sister."

"Thank you, Lefevre. I'm engaged for this set, but George isn't."

Young Lefevre did not appear to catch this latter declaration. At all events he started off without paying any attention to it, and was soon seen standing up *vis-à-vis* with one of the Ladies Devereux, in what was in those days the universal and almost only figure, the country-dance. Charley also darted off for his partner; and presently, to the sound of some half-a-dozen fiddles, with a couple of violoncellos groaning a bad bass, five-and-twenty or thirty couples took it by turns to cross hands down the middle, up again, and *poussette*, as if life and death were in the balance. Waltzes, be it remembered, were in those days things unknown. Even the quadrille, now passing from us as obsolete, had not

yet made its way to the front ; but country-dances kept the pulses beating, relieved, from time to time, by promenades, which, more perhaps than the dance itself, gave opportunity for the utterance of soft things. Into both sources of interest Charley threw himself with all his might. Lucy Cox had never been in his eyes so beautiful as she appeared that night, with her delicate waist pushed up between her shoulders, and the well-turned ankle exquisitely displayed from beneath the white muslin robe that scarcely reached it. What he said to her, or she to him, it is not for us to reveal ; but more than one chaperone—Lady Freeman herself being among the number—appeared to consider that the flirtation was a little more marked than the customs of good society half a century ago altogether warranted. Hence, when at last, with evident reluctance, Charles led his partner back to the bench on which Lady Freeman sat, her ladyship took poor Lucy to task very kindly, but very frankly, for forgetting

herself. What would her ladyship say if she could look in upon us now, either at the slowest of our balls in Eton Square, or—scarcely more startling—when the Ladies' Mile is thronged, and the *monde* and the *demi-monde* struggle for precedence?

"You see, my dear, it is not the thing for young ladies to linger too long with their partners after the dance. It sets people talking, and young ladies should not be talked about."

"I did not mean to do wrong, Lady Freeman."

"I know you didn't, my love. But we sometimes do wrong without meaning it. Don't fret—there's no occasion for that; just be a little more guarded in future."

Meanwhile the elder of the Harrises continued to stand apart, only his college acquaintances occasionally taking notice of him, and of these not one proposing, as they did to his brother, to make him acquainted with other members of their families. The latter

circumstance annoyed him greatly, for the line drawn between himself and Charles was too broadly marked not to arrest his attention. He was pondering over it, and trying to account for it, when one of the stewards approached and begged to know whether he might find him a partner. The first impulse on George's part was to reject the proposal with disdain. On second thoughts he replied in the affirmative, the idea suggesting itself to his mind that possibly the reserve of his own manner, his standing aloof even from the vicar's daughters, might have conveyed to others the impression that he was too proud or too shy to mix with them on terms of familiarity.

"Your name, sir?" asked the steward.

"Harris," replied George.

"A son of Lord Belmore?"

"Yes; his eldest son."

These words, pronounced with a good deal of emphasis, had their effect upon the master of the revels, who suddenly diverged from a



course which he had begun to take in the direction of a bevy of wall-flowers at the bottom of the room, and led his companion towards a bench on which a young lady, just released from a partner, was sitting down.

“Is your ladyship engaged for the next dance?”

The person thus addressed looked up, first at the functionary who had just spoken, then at the gentleman whom he was conducting towards her. The outward appearance of the latter seemed to satisfy her, and she replied that she was not engaged. There followed upon this the customary process of introduction, the steward carefully prefixing to Mr Harris's name the term “Honourable,” and making Mr Harris aware that he was about to have the honour of leading out Lady Alice Tremanere. Lady Alice gave her hand, with a pleasant smile, to George Harris, and in five minutes placed him opposite to herself at the head of the dance. George's triumph was complete. His partner, besides being a daughter of the Duke of Preston, was

confessedly the belle of the night, and thoroughly understood how to draw out and make the most of any one with whom it suited her convenience to enter into amicable relations. It seemed, also, as if the brilliant beauty were pleased with the acquaintance which she had formed, for she maintained with him an animated conversation during the interval that elapsed while the set was forming, and then threw herself, when the dance began, heartily into its mazes. The spirits of the couple appeared indeed to rise as they warmed to their pleasant work. They did eccentric things, such as beauties and their partners considered themselves privileged in those days to do, which, giving great offence to some, excited vast amusement among others, especially among those who happened not to be sufferers from the feat. At last it pleased them to become tired, while as yet they were removed from the bottom of the dance by some six or eight couples, and without one word of apology to the persons whom they were slight-

ing, they walked away. No special notice was taken of the incident at the moment. Ladies' voices might, indeed, be heard complaining of people who gave themselves unnecessary airs ; and gentlemen shrugged their shoulders, smiling contemptuously. But, by-and-by, when, after a considerable pause, Lady Alice and her partner came to the front again, matters became more serious. He or she, or both, seemed to have watched the current of the dance till it carried to the top of the room the lady and gentleman from whom they had broken away, and then, not without some but indifferently-suppressed laughter, they quitted their seats and planted themselves just above that couple.

"By what right, sir," demanded the gentleman thus abruptly superseded—an officer, dressed as all officers used to be on such occasions, in uniform—"by what right do you presume to place your partner above mine?"

"By the right of precedence," replied George, coolly. "We resume our proper places."

"Your proper place is the bottom, not the head of the set, and I recommend you to take it."

"Her ladyship's place is, I think, just above your partner—and mine, therefore, just above you."

Her ladyship seemed to enjoy the joke immensely, and the band striking up at that moment, she made a step in advance in order to lead off, but the way was barred. Taking his partner under his arm, the officer planted himself in the gangway, and said, calmly but determinedly, "You don't pass here till my partner and I have danced down."

"Sir, you are a ruffian!" exclaimed George, lifting his hand to strike a blow, but not letting it fall.

"I shall be glad to know that you are a gentleman, which at this moment I very much doubt," replied his antagonist; "our personal difference we can in that case settle to-morrow. To-night I have a public duty to perform."

All this passed so quickly, that time for the

interference of the stewards there was none; yet, brief as the altercation was, it sufficed to break up the dance. Some ladies shrieked and fled, others retired quietly to their seats, and the gentlemen gathering in groups about the disputants, expressed themselves in no measured terms respecting the interruption. Among others Charley ran up and planted himself, not unnaturally, beside his brother.

Lady Alice, also, kept her place gallantly at her partner's side, and the lady whom the officer had taken under his special charge, either could not, or did not withdraw her arm from his. Charley looked at her, which his brother, as it seemed, had not once condescended to do, and immediately recognised in her the elder of the Miss Coxes.

By this time the stewards were on the spot, and Major Deshon, the immediate cause of the affray, gave a correct account of the incidents which led to it. The truth of his statement could not be disputed, but on the subject of the validity of Lady Alice's claims opinions varied.

"Very well, gentlemen," said the Major, "you may have your own customs here, but as they don't agree with the custom which prevails everywhere else, you must excuse me if I adhere to my purpose. I must have the honour of leading my partner down the dance in the proper order, otherwise there shall be no more dancing for any one to-night."

A resolute man, even if he stand alone, usually prevails in disputes like this; but Major Deshon did not stand alone. A vast majority of the guests, with a minority among the stewards, adopted his view of the question; and the set being ré-formed, he enjoyed the triumph of carrying Mary Cox from the top to the bottom of the room. Every couple, except one, stood up to do them honour. Lady Alice and George Harris sulked and withdrew. They were received by the Duchess, and the circle of which she was the centre, with indignant commiseration; and a good many epithets, not of the most flattering kind, were expended

in decrying the conduct of the puppy who had presumed to interrupt their triumph. The matter did not, however, end there. As soon as the dance terminated, a brother officer of Major Deshon made his way to that part of the room where the Duchess and her party were sitting, and, bowing to the ladies, requested that Mr Harris, with whose name and condition one of the stewards had made him acquainted, would favour him with a minute's private conversation. All who heard the message conveyed perfectly understood what was implied in it. They looked at one another gravely, but made no sign. Honour had its code in those days, and a strict one too, any interference with which would have been regarded as a crime against society. Hence, when Mr George Harris quitted Lady Alice's side, and went apart to receive the cartel of which the individual who had addressed him was the bearer, it may be doubted whether her ladyship's feelings were not plea-

surable rather than the reverse. To have been the subject of a duel was no obscure feather in the bonnet of a woman of fashion sixty years ago, especially if she aimed at conquests.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DUEL.

“WHO is that, mother, whom you have picked up, and whom Alice, with her usual consideration for others, has got into a difficulty?” demanded Lord Claude Tremanere of the Duchess, his mother. “I saw the whole affair, and can assure you that your *protégé* is in the wrong, though I make no doubt that my amiable sister is at the bottom of it.”

“Your amiable sister and her partner were grossly insulted by that person in regimentals,” interposed Lady Alice; “and it ill becomes you to take part against them.”

“My amiable sister has an awkward trick of presuming upon her rank and her beauty in

doing things that would not be tolerated in anybody less fascinating, and won't always, as we see, be tolerated in her. Seriously, Alice, you have behaved extremely ill to - night. You've involved that young man in a quarrel which may cost him his life. Who is he?"

"He is Lord Belmore's son, my dear," replied the Duchess; "his eldest son—an acquaintance worth cultivating. Lord and Lady Belmore may be as objectionable as you please, but their sons, and especially the eldest, ought not to suffer for the sins of their father."

"I'm not quite sure of that, looking at the matter through your spectacles, mother. But the lad may be a good fellow in himself. He is very young, too, and must not be allowed to make his first start in life a false one. Introduce me to him, will you? You see he is coming back to us."

George came back apparently undisturbed by what might have passed between him and Captain Basset. Yet it was of rather a serious nature. The choice had been given him of

either retracting on the spot, and apologising for the term of reproach which he had applied to Major Deshon as publicly as he uttered it, or giving to Major Deshon the satisfaction which, under like circumstances, every gentleman has a right to demand, and no gentleman refuses ; and George, brought up to believe that gentlemen could not possibly apologise on the spot for anything, or apologise at all, unhesitatingly accepted the latter alternative. That which puzzled him most in the matter was where to find a friend. He could not bring himself to lean on Charley. There was little cordiality between them, and if the reverse had been the case, Charley was a mere boy. He did not care to ask Cox to be his second in an affair with which the young man's sister was connected, and could not count with certainty on getting the request acceded to were he to put it. With all the other men of his college set he was at that moment so disgusted that, rather than appeal to one of them, he would go out with a groom to attend him. From these dif-

ficulties he was most unexpectedly and agreeably relieved by Lord Claude Tremanere's unsolicited offer to stand by him. "But mind, Mr Harris, a principal must put himself absolutely into the hands of his second. The moment you make choice of a friend you render him the keeper of your honour. What I say is to be done must be done. Are you satisfied with my terms?"

"Perfectly, Lord Claude, and very much obliged to you for taking so grave a responsibility upon you."

Matters having been thus far settled, Lord Claude sought out Major Deshon's friend, and arranged with him that the meeting should take place on the Downs at eight o'clock next morning. There were many, both men and women, in that large room, who quite took in the object of these quiet conferences. Yet neither man nor woman ever entertained a thought of interfering with it. Magistrates were present, and the laws against breaches of the peace were exactly then what they are

now. But no magistrate moved, nor was a word spoken of putting the law in force. On the contrary, midnight being still in the future—for county balls began early sixty years ago—dancing was renewed with great spirit, into which none present threw themselves with more perfect *abandon* than the principals and seconds in the coming duel. At last carriages began to be announced, and group after group, some wearied with dancing too much, others exhausted with doing little or nothing, stole away.

“You won’t go home to-night, Mr Harris?” said Lord Claude, encountering his friend, after he had taken leave of the Duchess, and was passing with his brother towards the street.

“I think I had better. They might be alarmed if I stayed out all night; and there will be plenty of time to get back before eight o’clock.”

“Get back for what, George?” asked Charles.

“Oh, I’ve made an appointment with Lord Claude. By the by, you don’t know my

brother, Lord Claude. Let me introduce him to you."

"Possibly," replied Lord Claude, bowing to Charles ; " but don't you think it will be wiser in you to take a bed, or even sleep on a sofa at the Mitre, where we are? You will be much more fresh."

"I have no change of dress here, nor anything else, you know."

"Never mind about that ; I daresay I can supply all your wants, and if not, a loose cloak hides every anachronism."

"What does all this mean, George?" repeated Charley. "You had words, I am aware, with that officer Mary Cox was dancing with, but it was all settled, wasn't it?"

"Oh yes, settled sure enough," replied his brother, laughing ; "and it's just because of the settlement that Lord Claude wishes me to remain with him to-night. I think you are right, my lord. Charley, you drive home, and if any questions are asked, say that I remained to sleep at the Mitre, and to breakfast with the Duchess

of Preston in the morning. I hope to be with you at luncheon, or to dinner at the latest."

Charles Harris had no special regard for his brother. Neither was he old enough nor sufficiently experienced quite to comprehend the nature of the case in which George was involved, yet he assented to the proposal made to him not without considerable misgivings. He had been offended with George's assumed ignorance of Mary Cox's identity, for he did not believe it to be real; and was by no means pleased to see George himself taken up, as he appeared to be, by the Prestons. But none of these counteracting influences were potent enough to relieve his mind from an intense yet undefined anxiety which rested upon it throughout the whole of his homeward journey. It was a great relief to him to find that, though he did not reach Baddlesmere till the clocks were striking six, not one member of the household was stirring. He took especial care to tread lightly as he passed through the hall up

the stairs, and so along the corridor to his chamber ; but his sleep was light and broken, and his dreams troubled him.

Meanwhile George, accompanying his new friends to the Mitre, received from one and all of them the strongest marks of attention. The Duke himself was not of the party : he had been called by public business to town ; but the Duchess and her three daughters, of whom Lady Alice was the youngest, could not, as it appeared, make too much of him. There was something even of tenderness in her manner, especially when she bade him good-night, which delighted as much as it surprised him, so little had he been accustomed through life to have his natural affections appealed to, or his craving self-love satisfied. But there was no time then to indulge the sort of reflections to which that incident gave rise. The ladies were gone, and Lord Claude and he being left in possession of the parlour, the former entered at once on the business that was before them.

“ There can be no doubt, Harris—I think



we may dispense with the mister and the lord, under existing circumstances—that you have not the best of the difference. I know what you are going to say—that you could not allow my sister to be insulted, and so forth. . . Very true ; but unfortunately my sister was in the wrong, and you, by taking her part, got into the wrong also, which you very much aggravated by calling Major Deshon a ruffian, and lifting your hand to strike him. Nothing whatever can atone for a blow, except the death of him who delivers it ; and to call a man a ruffian, and that, too, in a public ball-room, is an offence second only to the infliction of a blow. Now you in a measure committed both of these outrages. You did not strike your man, I allow, but you lifted your hand to him ; and the unfortunate epithet which you applied to him was heard by all. I think, then, you must acknowledge to me that you stand at great disadvantage towards your adversary.”

“As you put it, there is no denying that

fact; but we must consider the provocation also. What right had he to act as he did? Was it not the height of insolence to come between Lady Alice and myself, and tell us that we should not dance?"

: "The insolence, as it seems to me, began sooner. What right had Alice and you first to slight these people by refusing to dance with them, as you ought to have done before sitting down, and then to plant yourselves between them and their proper turn to lead down a dance which you had abandoned?"

"We hadn't abandoned the dance; we only sat down to rest, because Lady Alice was tired."

"Very well; then you ought to have resumed your places, if you resumed them at all, either at the bottom of the set or in the exact interval which was properly your own, according as the stewards might determine. My sister Alice is not a good guide on such occasions. I blame her for the first offence, which Major Deshon was quite justified in resenting;

but the second, and by far the graver, is your own."

"Why then do you go out with me as my friend, if you think my quarrel so unjust?"

"Because, in the first place, you have got into this quarrel through my sister's folly; and, in the next, because I wish to get you honourably out of it."

"I don't see how I am to get out of it honourably, except by either shooting the Major or being shot myself."

"You must on no account whatever shoot the Major till you have acted towards him as becomes a high-minded gentleman. No man is disgraced by frankly apologising for a wrong which he is conscious of having committed. You can't but be conscious that you did the Major great wrong."

"But surely, granting all that you say to be correct, the time for apologising is past. His friend required a public apology of me on the spot, and I refused it. What am I to do now, except give him the satisfaction which he requires?"

"Remember your promise to me. You have put yourself into my hands. I shall require you to do exactly what I should do myself were I in your situation. Will you do it?"

"Certainly. How otherwise could I behave honourably by you?"

"That's right. You must apologise on the ground, but not till you have received his fire. Neither must you return his fire. Keep your pistol at the present, while he presents at you; and after he has delivered his shot, raise your arm and fire in the air. I will then, in your name, express your readiness to do what could hardly have been expected from you while your blood was hot and in a public ball-room. Are you content?"

"I suppose I must be. I suppose I can't help myself."

"No, indeed, you cannot; and what's more, our opponents will probably require that the apology be reduced to writing, and published in the local newspapers. I——"

“Must I consent to that also? By heaven! I would rather be shot.”

“Very likely. But to that also you must consent, if it be required. Don’t fret about it, however; I’ll take care that the written apology is so expressed as to save your honour. Don’t forget that I am as much bound up in that as yourself.”

“Very well, Tremanere. I promised to put myself in your hands, and I do so. My honour will be quite safe in your keeping.”

“Bravely spoken and well resolved; and now, good-night. They have found a room for you, it appears, next my own; go and lie down. I will take care to call you in good time, and a cup of coffee will be ready for us before we start.”

The friends shook hands and parted. It was already broad daylight, and neither George Harris nor Lord Claude Tremanere, if the truth must be told, felt any great inclination to sleep. The former undressed, however, as he had been advised to do; but men rarely rest

their heads contentedly on their pillows if the prospect before them be one of a not improbable death by violence ere many hours pass. George Harris was not wanting in courage—few well-bred English gentlemen are—nevertheless, the idea of what might occur when he rose again disturbed him, and the more, perhaps, that the trial to which he was about to be subjected was one of endurance only. Let it not be forgotten that the religious principles of the Harrises, if they had any at all, were of the loosest possible kind. They neither believed nor disbelieved what churchmen teach. They lived in and for the world that now is, without seriously asking themselves whether there be any other. Their conduct in affairs, their motives of action, their habits of thought, were all alike the results of mere impulse. The single restraint to which they submitted was a regard to appearances, and that not always implicitly. Had the youth who tosses from side to side this morning, trying to sleep, yet sleeping not at all, received instructions

different from those which Lord Claud conveyed to him, the chances are, that he would have been less disturbed than he is. Men going out to fight, whether it be in single combat, or as units in a great array, think as much of what they may possibly do, as of what they may possibly suffer. They are to give as well as to take; to strike down an enemy so as to avoid being struck down by him; and the anticipation of the *mêlée*, whether it be amid fire or steel, braces their nerves, and gives them something to look forward to. But to go forth in order to be made a target for others to shoot at, there is nothing animating, but the reverse, in such an anticipation as that. George Harris did not relish the prospect which was before him, and more than once half resolved to make it different. But then to go off from the engagement with his friend, foolish as he began to consider it to be, would not only lose for him a good opinion, which he very much valued, but might, and probably would, cast a slur upon his own per-

sonal courage. He made up his mind, therefore, to act in every respect as he should be instructed, and to abide the consequences.

And what was Lord Claud Tremanere about all the while. Repenting of the part which he had undertaken to play? No; but half-unconsciously impugning that code of honour which forces gentlemen to choose between the violation of a great moral law and the loss to themselves of their place in society. Lord Claud Tremanere, our readers must take along with them, was George Harris's senior by ten good years. Now we see things when we turn thirty in a very different light from that in which they presented themselves to us when we were but a year or two on the wrong side of twenty; and Lord Claud, besides that he had the experience of the more advanced age to guide him, was not alone a man of honour, but a religious man. His thoughts were therefore uneasy thoughts that morning. Not that he would have counselled any one circumstanced as young Harris was to evade the danger to



which he was about to be exposed. "If I be justified in risking my life in defence of my purse, surely my sin is not greater if I put it to the hazard in vindication of my honour; and to shoot down the man who assails my honour cannot be a more culpable act than to shoot down the man who assails my property." Yes, that was the conclusion at which religious men arrived within the memory of the present generation. It was, with partial exceptions, far more immediately arrived at by their fathers and their grandfathers. Did it satisfy them? Not all—not any of them absolutely; yet they acted upon it exactly as Lord Claud did that day, with a pang at their hearts which they could not stifle.

"At all events the lad shall not commit murder—for murder it would be were he in such a quarrel to take away life; and for himself, I pray God that the shot may miss him—for he shall not, if I can help it, be exposed to more than one."

Lord Claud did not lie down. He changed

his dress, making a careful toilet ; wrote several letters, some of them on public business, and so spending the time till the city clocks struck seven, proceeded to call George as he had promised to do. He found the young man up, and already half dressed. Their coffee was soon served, and a post-chaise, in which Lord Claud's servant had deposited a case of pistols, stood at the gate of the inn.

"Put my cloak about you, Harris, and let us go."

George threw the cloak over his shoulders, and they descended the stairs together. The servant opened the chaise-door. The two friends entered, and, waiting only till the man had settled himself on the bar which did duty as a driving-seat, the post-boy cracked his whip, and they rattled down the street.

The place appointed for the meeting was the same to which, at their annual festival, the Winchester boys repair in joyous procession. The belt of firs which crowns the summit of the hill now, crowned it then ; and the hill itself

was scaled by the same winding road which attracts at this day the notice of the railway passenger as he sweeps by. They mounted it at a walk, and found that they were first on the ground. They had not long to wait, however, ere another chaise arrived, out of which two gentlemen, Major Deshon and his friend, descended. A stiff recognition passed between the seconds, who proceeded at once to pace out the ground, and back to back, at the distance of twelve paces from each other, the principals were stationed.

"You have brought your own pistols, I see," observed Lord Claud. "We have also brought ours. Shall we toss for the choice?"

"As you please," replied the other. "But perhaps it may save time if we load both pairs."

"One pair will probably be enough," said Lord Claud. "We have no choice. You may have your own if you prefer it."

"Oh, we have no preference, only I fancy we are not here for child's-play."

“Certainly not. Load both pairs if you will.”

And both pairs were accordingly loaded.

In the toss which followed for the first choice of weapons, as well as for determining which of the seconds should give the signal of action, Lord Claud Tremanere was successful. Instead, however, of making use of his own, he requested Major Deshon's second to lend him his pistols, of which he put one into the hand of the Major, and the other he gave to George. He then took his own station at a few yards' distance from the line of fire, and midway between the two combatants. Captain Basset placed himself, in like manner, on the opposite side; and thus the two seconds, each with a pistol under his arm, faced one another.

“Captain Basset,” Lord Claud said, “be so good as keep your eye fixed on my friend. I will look steadily at yours. And, gentlemen, when I ask you ‘Are you ready?’ you will face about and hold your pistols with the muzzles to the ground, not raising them till I give the

word 'Present.' Then fire as soon as your weapons are raised."

The persons thus addressed did exactly as they were required to do. They all, with the exception of George Harris, knew what they were about, and he showed himself an apt as well as a perfectly collected scholar. At the word "Are you ready?" the combatants faced to their right, and stood eyeing each other with their pistols on a line with the seam of their breeches. "Present!" came next in quick succession, whereupon both levelled each at the other, and almost immediately one report was heard. The bullet from Major Deshon's pistol tore his adversary's coat at the shoulder, and slightly grazed the skin. George Harris, though not unaware of the shock, stood still for a couple of seconds, and then, slowly raising his hand, discharged his weapon in the air.

"Major Deshon," said Lord Claud, stepping forward, "enough has been done to prove that my friend is a man of honour; and now I do not hesitate, in his name, to withdraw the of-

fensive epithet which he applied to you last night, and to apologise for his having used it. Are you satisfied ?”

“ The insult was publicly offered, my lord,” interposed Captain Basset, “ and it must be publicly atoned for. I cannot allow my friend to be satisfied with an apology offered here.”

“ We are here to give you and your friend satisfaction, sir,” replied Lord Claud. “ What do you require ?”

Captain Basset, upon this, approached his principal, with whom he conferred for a moment, and then returned to Lord Claud.

“ My friend is fully alive to the honourable nature of your proceeding ; and though naturally much offended, has no desire to push the matter to an extremity. If you will consent to make your apology a written one ; and authorise me to publish it in the newspapers, I will withdraw my friend from the ground ; but not otherwise.”

The tone in which this demand was made, more than the demand itself, jarred against

the feelings both of George and his second. The former, indeed, made a motion to Lord Claud of dissent ; but of that Lord Claud took no notice.

“Your demand is reasonable,” he replied, somewhat stiffly ; “and you will see that I was of this opinion before we came out. Here is a paper which I drew up in anticipation. I will read it to your principal, or you may read it, if you prefer.”

“Read it, by all means, my lord,” interposed Major Deshon. “I am satisfied that anything which your lordship proposes will be such as a man of honour may accept.”

Major Deshon judged correctly. Lord Claud’s paper contained an ample and manly apology for an unbecoming epithet applied, in a moment of irritation, to the Major : and the Major at once expressed himself satisfied with it.

“And give me leave to suggest,” he added, “that you and Captain Basset add to it a statement of the details of this morning’s

work ; giving my antagonist full credit for his behaviour as a man of spirit as well as of honour."

There could be no possible objection to this, nor was any offered ; though Captain Basset gave in to the arrangement with apparent reluctance. He repeated his phrase of "child's-play," and seemed to regard himself as ill used—neither combatant having been, as he termed it, so much as "winged." A supplement was therefore appended to Lord Claud's document ; and the gentlemen who had come abroad to kill and be killed shook hands, and betook themselves, unharmed, two to the Mitre Inn, the other two to the Barracks.



## CHAPTER VII.

### LIFE'S LAUNCH.

LORD and Lady Belmore were neither surprised nor alarmed by the non-appearance of their sons at the breakfast-table. They were aware that the young men could not possibly reach home till the morning was considerably advanced ; and, taking for granted that they would make up in the day for the loss of rest in the night, they made no inquiry about them. By-and-by, however, when Charley made his appearance about noon, and told that his brother had remained to sleep at the Mitre, and to breakfast with the Prestons, their curiosity was awakened. What could have induced him to do that, not having so much as a

change of apparel with him? Had anything happened of moment enough to make him forget what was due as much to himself as to his newly-acquired friends? And when Charles, closely pressed, gave a *résumé* of as much as he had observed in the occurrences of the previous night, Lord and Lady Belmore looked at one another with an expression of grave alarm in their countenances.

“I think I’ll go over to Winchester at once,” said Lord Belmore; “there may be something not quite right in the case. Ring the bell, Charley, and order the curricule to be got ready while I finish a letter.”

The curricule was ordered, harnessed, and brought round; and Lord Belmore, having finished and sealed his letter, was hurrying towards it, when Lady Belmore stopped him.

“Would it not be well to take over a change of dress for George, and the means of making a toilet? And, Charley, hadn’t you better go with your father?”

Both propositions were assented to. A

change was put up for the absentee, as well as his dressing-case ; and Charley, following his father, took a seat beside him in front. A groom jumped up behind, and away they went, as fast as two well-bred and high-actioned horses could carry them. Two hours brought them to Winchester. They made straight for the Mitre ; and great was the relief both of father and son when, upon approaching the archway, they saw George himself standing at the window of a room which overlooked it. He nodded to them as they drove into the yard, and before they could disentangle themselves and get down from their places, he was on the spot to receive them.

“I quite expected you,” he said, taking his father’s hand, which was held out to him. “I was sure you would come over ; and didn’t therefore care to go home in broad day, fagged out in pumps and silk stockings. Come up, pray, and thank Lord Claud for his noble behaviour to me, and the Duchess for her great kindness. You have arrived just in time, for their horses

are ordered, and they are on the eve of starting."

"You must tell me, first of all, what has happened," replied Lord Belmore, leading the way to a parlour, into which the landlord made haste to usher him. "You had a difference in the ball-room. What was it about, and how did it end?"

George related, with tolerable accuracy, the chief incidents both of the disagreement and its consequences. He could not, indeed, adhere altogether to the simple truth as it was. He made it appear—or tried to do so—that in the beginning the blame rested mainly with his opponent. But he made no concealment of his own lack of discretion, and eulogised, as it deserved, Lord Claud's sound judgment in the settlement of the difference. "I assure you, sir, that I cannot express how much I feel obliged to him. And as to the ladies, they could not treat a son or a brother more generously than they have treated me. Pray come and thank them, before they go. They will

take it kindly, I am confident, and it is but fitting that you should."

Lord Belmore did not go to the Duchess's apartment. He wrote, indeed, a note to Lord Claud, which he desired a waiter to deliver; and then suggesting to his son that it would be judicious to change his apparel, ordered luncheon. The young men were equally surprised at their father's reticence. It seemed to them unaccountable that he should experience or express the slightest reluctance to do a deed so obviously becoming; and the younger, while his brother withdrew to change his dress, said so.

"The Duchess and your mother are not on terms," said Lord Belmore, drily.

"My mother seems not to be on terms with anybody in her own rank of life," replied Charles. "I have no doubt there is good cause for it; but the thing itself is unfortunate."

"It is unfortunate," answered his father.

"Couldn't you overcome the difficulty, sir?

I assure you that both George and I—George especially—felt ourselves last night very like outcasts among our own people. The fellows spoke to us, to be sure, and Lefevre offered to introduce me to his sister ; but though I told him that George hadn't got a partner, he took no notice. I don't know how George managed to get introduced to the Prestons, but they were the only people in the room that noticed him. He wouldn't look at the Coxes, and they were most kind to him. Isn't it a pity not to cultivate these Prestons ? They are evidently willing to meet us half way."

"By all means, my boy, cultivate the Prestons, you and George—or any other people in your own station that you like ; but don't ask or expect your mother and me to enter into society again. We have both withdrawn from it, as you see, and don't intend to return to it."

Charles could not urge a point against which his father's mind was so clearly made up. He was chagrined and mortified, but he held his peace. He and Lord Belmore ate their lun-

cheon together in silence ; George was differently occupied. Having completed his toilet, he returned to the apartments of his new friends, whom he found bonneted and cloaked, and preparing to pass to their carriage, which waited for them in the court below. There was a slight yet perceptible change in their manner. Lord Claud had received Lord Belmore's note. Whether it contained any expression of which Lord Claud disapproved, there was nothing to show ; but George saw that his quondam second would have been better pleased had the note never reached him ; and it soon came out that he did not care to answer it.

"Pray tell Lord Belmore, with my compliments," he said to George, gravely, "that I did nothing for you that I wouldn't have done for any young man thrown into a like difficulty, through the mistake of my sister, and that I have no claim whatever upon his gratitude, and regret that he should have taken the trouble to express it."

"You'll come and see us in London, Mr Harris," put in the Duchess, resuming, in part at least, her former cordiality of manner. "You know where to find us, and we shall always be glad to see you. Good-bye."

"I will not fail to take advantage of your Grace's invitation when I do go to London," replied George. "I only wish that you could be persuaded to visit my mother at Baddlesmere. It lies on your direct way to town, and she would be delighted to welcome and thank you all."

"Bye-bye, Mr Harris—bye-bye. I shall not soon forget my *preux chevalier*," interposed Lady Alice. "My brother insists upon it that I behaved very ill. I look to you to defend me."

"Against all comers," replied George.

No more passed on that occasion. One after another the members of the ducal family shook hands with their new acquaintance, and descending the stairs entered their carriage. It was already packed; the horses were put to,



the post-boys mounted, and, guarded by two footmen, both armed, though the necessity of travelling armed had by this time pretty well passed away, they drove off.

“I say, father, why didn’t you call upon the Duchess? I told her that my mother would be delighted if she would take Baddlesmere on her way; but of course she took no notice of an invitation from me. Had you waited upon her, as you ought to have done, and invited her yourself, I am sure she would have come home with us.”

“I have my doubts on that head, George,” replied Lord Belmore: “but the sooner we go home and relieve your mother from her anxiety on your account, the better.”

That was all that passed. George sulked—Charles fretted; both were silent, as well as their father, throughout the homeward journey; and when they alighted at the hall-door, the son whose safety had for many hours been to Lady Belmore her one subject of thought,

scarcely condescended to notice his mother, though she stood there to receive him.

"It seems to me," said Lady Belmore to her husband, when they were left alone together, "that the boys have been long enough in a state of pupilage. This is but a cheerless home for them, poor fellows ; and if we don't mind, Charley will be getting into a scrape with Lucy Cox. She is a very nice girl, certainly ; and for my part I have no wish that he should follow any other bent than his own honest inclinations in seeking a wife : but he is a mere boy, and can't possibly know his own mind. And as to George, I am afraid he will go entirely to the bad, unless he take to some occupation that will fill his mind."

"The same ideas have occurred to me," replied Lord Belmore, "and I have taken steps to act upon them. The difficulty is to choose a profession for George. Charles will go into the army ; indeed his name is down for a commission, and I expect every day to get

notice that the money must be lodged for it. I will talk the matter over with them this very day, after dinner."

Lord Belmore kept his word. It was the usual custom of that isolated family to make short work with their meals ; the younger members going out in summer to enjoy the evenings in the open air ; the elders moping almost always apart. To-day Lord Belmore detained his sons after their mother had quitted the dining-room, and propounded to them his plans. He found them both delighted with the general proposal. Their home was, indeed, to them very cheerless ; and of life at the university—to men who combine hard work with hard play, perhaps the happiest season of their existence—they had become exceedingly tired. When they came to particulars, however, differences of opinion arose. Charles was delighted with the prospect of joining the army. He didn't want to idle his time away either in London or in country quarters. He was most anxious to be with Lord Wellington in Portu-

gal, and trusted that his father would get him appointed to a regiment—a cavalry regiment, if possible, forming part of the army in the field. George, without waiting to be told what his father's views might be concerning himself, pleaded for an analogous issue.

“You served in the Guards yourself, sir. Won't it be the right thing to send your eldest son into the Guards also?”

“But I don't want you both to be soldiers ; and you are, besides, too old to enter the army now. You will be two-and-twenty next birthday.”

“Surely that's not too old, sir? Young Devereux was three-and-twenty when he quitted Christ-Church to join the —— Hussars.”

“Still, I think that it will be better for you to embrace a civil profession. I had thought of entering you at Lincoln's Inn. Whether you succeed as a practising lawyer or not, the fact that you are called to the bar will qualify you for almost any office under Government ; and though we are on the wrong side of the

hedge now, we may fairly hope to be on the right side before you are an old man."

"But what can I possibly want from any Government, unless I go into Parliament, and aspire after high office? Long may you live, sir; but you know I must be Lord Belmore some day, if I survive you. Wouldn't it be better to let Charley study law, and let me go into the army?"

"No, George. The arrangement I have made is best for both of you. Whether you ever stand in need of a place under Government or not, you can't better prepare yourself for the duties of a county gentleman than by studying the laws of your country. I have arranged with Mr Williams, the eminent conveyancer, to receive you as a pupil at the close of the long vacation, and your allowance shall be ample. I recommend you, however, to work as hard as if you had only your own exertions to depend upon. I wish my father had so dealt with me. It might have been better for all of us to-day."

George Harris was not overflowing with military ardour. He rather looked down upon the profession of a soldier than otherwise ; and suggested for himself a commission in the Guards chiefly because it would give him his proper status in society, and keep him a considerable portion of his time at least in town. His father, however, seemed to prefer that he should study law ; and he consented. His own views of study differed, indeed, very considerably from those expressed by paterfamilias. He would read, so long as he took interest in what he read—and not one hour longer. He would get his father to return him, at the next dissolution, for one of his boroughs, and either seek distinction in the House of Commons, or take matters easy there, as circumstances and the humour of the moment might suggest. As to Charles, he could with difficulty restrain himself for joy. Though saying little about it, he had indulged in many a dream of glory achieved with his own right arm ; and now that the prospect of converting these dreams into

realities was before him, he was wellnigh beside himself with delight. The three men, therefore, rose from table that day in far better humour with themselves and with one another than they had been in times past ; and, an occurrence never noticed before, actually put on their hats and walked abroad together.

This first launch into life, however fruitful in joy to the immediate subjects of it, casts a sad cloud over the brows of those who feel that they are to be left behind. Lord and Lady Belmore could not contemplate the coming severance from their sons without a pang. True, there was much to reconcile them to the contingency. The lads, especially the elder, were not amiable ; and father and mother perfectly well understood that, circumstanced as they were, it was scarcely possible that the case should be otherwise. But fathers and mothers who can witness with indifference the first flight of the young birds from their parent nest, are, what neither Lord nor Lady

Belmore can be accused of being, not so much callous as unnatural. And there were others who heard the news with deep regret. The vicar's family had become much attached to Charley. Of George they saw little. He rarely condescended to visit them, unless formally invited ; but Charley went and came among them as if he had been one of themselves. Alas ! poor Lucy ! Those bright blue eyes were often dim now with tears which rose unbidden ; and her smile, though just as sweet and tender as it had ever been, became sad enough even when Charley was near her.

“ You'll think of me, Lucy, when I'm gone. You'll hope that I may find an early opportunity of distinguishing myself. And when you read in the 'Gazette' that I have captured an eagle, and killed the French officer that carried it, won't you be glad on my account ? won't you be proud of me ? ”

“ I won't be glad, Charley ; I won't be proud. I don't want you to kill anybody—why should I ? I would be more glad—— ”



Poor child! she had been hurried into saying more than she meant to say—a great deal more than, perhaps, it quite became her maiden modesty to utter; but when was seventeen ever restrained by the laws of prudence and decorum when the light of a first pure love had begun to break upon it? As was to be expected, the young hero in embryo poured out his whole soul on the instant. He had loved her ever since they first knew each other. Go where he might, meet with whom he would, he could never love again; and if he were spared to return covered with honours, he would go to his father at once and ask him to consent that Lucy should be his. Well, well, it is the old, old story—words, kisses, sweet embraces, the interchange of tokens and of vows, the miserable parting, the promises to write, the confident and honest asseverations that for ever and for ever the heart would be true, and—in the long-run—whatsoever fate may determine. Close we the lid on Pandora's box.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LIBRARIAN.

IN the London towards which these young men were about to turn their faces, there dwelt, all this while, an individual over whom the ten years that have passed since he last came prominently before us had exercised a strong and peculiar influence. It has been hinted elsewhere that Mr Thompson, the librarian at Belmore House, lived very much in a world of his own. Day and night, sleeping and waking, a single object filled his mind—vaguely, indeed, because it cannot be said to have given rise to any settled purpose or reasonable expectation, but with a tenacity so firm, and a completeness so entire, as left no room for any

other to jostle against it. He lived to think of Lady Belmore, and of nothing else. Mechanically he took down books from their shelves, ran through their contents, made a sufficiently accurate analysis of the same, and placed it on record ; but his thoughts were all the while with her whose miniature lay on the table beside him, and to whom he spoke, at intervals and audibly, in terms such as the poor savage applies to his divinity. In his own way he was, at the same time, the most conscientious of human beings. He had undertaken, at her suggestion, his present charge, and nothing short of a direct command from her could have induced him to neglect or go through with it in a perfunctory manner. He therefore rose early, spent some hours before breakfast daily in arranging his catalogue, returned to his labours, and persevered in them till about noon, and then sallied forth, still upon her business. The two great ends that he set before him as often as he went abroad were—to penetrate into the mystery which connected

itself with the villa in Tottenham Court Road, and to find out and chastise the scoundrel who had dared to insult the object of his idolatry. For it is scarcely necessary to observe that, in assuring Lady Belmore, first, that her assailant was drunk, and next, that he knew him to be a worthless fellow, Mr Thompson had made truth subservient to convenience. He knew nothing whatever about the man. With all his soul he wished that he did. The life of such a scoundrel would not be worth an hour's purchase if they but encountered each other where the opportunity of trying issues with him should present itself.

Mr Thompson kept a diary, as we took occasion not long ago to state. It described not his actions only, but his thoughts and feelings,—the two latter wayward, extravagant, often poetical in no common degree, but not unfrequently so expressed as to be scarcely intelligible even to himself. This latter mode of recording the events of each day became more common with him in proportion as the chances of

achieving the great purposes of his existence grew more faint. For some time after the departure of the family into the country, it was his habit to transmit, perhaps twice a-week, portions of this journal to Baddlesmere, of which the arrival was promptly and gratefully acknowledged by Lady Belmore. But when weeks became months, and months grew into years without conveying to her any information more interesting than had been conveyed at the outset, her ladyship began to grow slack in sending back her acknowledgments, and by-and-by ceased altogether to answer them. Did Mr Thompson thereupon cease to worship and work for her? Quite otherwise. He was more frequently abroad than ever. He went forth earlier and returned later. Instead of sitting down to his duties in the library at six—four o'clock every morning, winter and summer, now found him there; and the appointed task being finished ere yet his fast was broken, he felt himself free to spend the entire London day in seeking for that which never came.

No. 39 St Ann Street, Soho, had, as may be supposed, peculiar attractions for him. He renewed his visits in that quarter very soon after Lady Belmore quitted town, but to no purpose. The same maid-servant that opened the door for him once before opened it again, and Mr Hogarth, for whom he inquired, proved to be at home, and disengaged. Now he had nothing in the world to say to Mr Hogarth. He had, indeed, so timed his visit as to be safe, as he imagined, from the result which attended it ; and finding himself outwitted on that head, hesitated before desiring to be introduced. To turn away, however, *re infecta*, would be to close the door upon himself for ever in the future. He therefore put a card into the girl's hand, and said he would wait below till she should present it. She ascended the stairs, but was still visible when another woman, coming up from below, confronted him.

"Are you one of Mrs Todd's servants ?" he said, carelessly.

"Yes, sir, I'm Mrs Todd's cook."

“Have you been long in your place?”

Just at this moment the door of a parlour on the right of the lobby, standing where Mr Thompson stood, opened, and Mrs Todd herself made her appearance.

“What are you about, gossiping and wasting your time there, Ann?” exclaimed that excellent person, with somewhat more of warmth in her tone than the occasion seemed to require. “Mr Discover will be back, and his room’s not done up yet. Why don’t you do your work?”

“I’m just going to do it, ma’am. The gentleman only asked me a question.”

“The gentleman didn’t intend to keep you idle. I’ll have no idle servants in this house. You wish to see Mr Hogarth, sir? Will you step into the parlour till the girl comes back?”

Mr Thompson had no alternative except to follow the landlady into her parlour. He did so, but was scarcely seated ere Jane returned with a request from Mr Hogarth that he would come up into his studio. There, in

front of the portrait of a fine woman, whom we have no difficulty in recognising as the Duchess of Preston, stood the artist, his palette in one hand, his brush in the other, with a black velvet skull-cap on his head, and a leathern apron covering the front of his dress. He turned as Mr Thompson entered the room, and, holding that gentleman's card between his forefinger and his thumb, begged him to take a seat. Mr Thompson did not, however, accept the proffered chair, but proceeded at once to make known his imaginary business. Mr Hogarth was aware that Lady Belmore had left town unexpectedly. She had desired him to ask whether Mr Hogarth would require any more sittings, in which case she would endeavour to arrange for returning shortly ; and he had further to request, in her ladyship's name, that Mr Hogarth would be so good as let him see the portrait, if it were sufficiently advanced to justify the proceeding. Mr Hogarth looked at the speaker, and, not recollecting that he had ever seen him before,



naturally asked him how it was that Lady Belmore had employed him on such a mission.

"I am a member of her ladyship's family," replied Mr Thompson. "I am librarian at Belmore House."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," rejoined Mr Hogarth. "I don't remember having had the pleasure of meeting you there. Probably you have recently been appointed?"

"Only the other day," answered Mr Thompson, putting judiciously into the background the fact that he had been tutor to the boys for rather more than three years. "I entered upon my duties the day before Lord Belmore went into the country, and can scarcely say that I am settled to them yet. But pray don't disturb yourself at this moment to meet my wishes. I can call any other day."

"Not at all, not at all," replied Mr Hogarth. "It is just as well that you called to-day, because I am about to change my lodgings, and must begin packing my unfinished portraits immediately, and, among the rest, Lady

Belmore's. This is a fine face, is it not? The Duchess is a beautiful woman still, but to my mind she can't hold a candle to Lady Belmore. What do you think?"

"I quite agree with you. Lady Belmore is the loveliest creature I ever beheld, and as noble as she is beautiful. What a kind heart she has!"

"Hers is a very generous nature. She would not be as she is had her nature been less generous. But why do you speak of her as kind-hearted?"

"Well, the more immediate cause of my so expressing myself is the interest she seems to take in the fate of some young woman about whom I understood her to say that you had spoken to her. Who is the young woman? if I may be allowed to put the question, and where is she?"

"Where she is I know no more than you do, and my acquaintance with her identity goes no further than this, that a poor old French gentleman who lodges in this house

claims her as a niece. Whether the tie between them was even more tender, I don't pretend to guess ; but she has deserted him, and the poor fellow is broken-hearted about it."

"I understood Lady Belmore to say that you or the French gentleman had seen her with the person who ran away with her, when you were all at Drury Lane together the other night, witnessing the performance of Juliet by the new actress. Is that so ?"

"Not as far as I am concerned ; nor, if my recollection serve me right, did the Frenchman see anything of the kind either. Poor fellow ! he told me a confused story about Mrs Todd having seen something or another which excited her curiosity, and of her dragging him out of the house, but nothing came of it. The whole affair, however, was so completely without beginning, middle, or end, that I dismissed it from my memory almost as soon as I heard it. I think I said something about it when I dined at Belmore

House a day or two ago ; but I couldn't possibly have led Lady Belmore to imagine that it had laid the slightest hold on my sympathies."

"I assure you, then, that it has laid the fastest hold upon hers. There was something said about the personal appearance of the lover that interested her very much. Didn't you describe it?"

"Not I. I may have described the personal appearance of the girl, because her uncle showed me a miniature of her, and a lovely creature she is. But I saw no portrait of the Lothario, and couldn't possibly say what he is like."

"I understood that you had spoken of him as a tall, good-looking man, with sandy hair and whiskers."

"That's it, is it? I had entirely forgotten saying even this much, but possibly I might. Lord Belmore's a tall, good-looking man, with sandy hair and whiskers ; but I'll vouch for it that no exquisite brunette sat near him. Her

ladyship may therefore put her mind at ease on that score."

"You do Lady Belmore wrong, Mr Hogarth. Her sympathies are with the girl. She would be glad to trace her out, if she could, and restore her to her uncle. She is not troubled with suspicions such as you hint at."

"I? I hint at no suspicions. It was your own description that put Lord Belmore into my head, just as mine may have done with her, if, indeed, I described the lover in your terms. However, let us see how her ladyship looks on canvas."

So saying, Mr Hogarth conducted his guest to another part of the studio, where, still unframed, but otherwise well-nigh ready to receive that last adornment, stood, with its face to the wall, a full-length portrait of Lady Belmore. He turned it carefully, placed it where the light might fall fairly upon it, and stepped back. It was a perfect masterpiece, on which the artist had evidently put out all his power, not alone because he might be

anxious to do justice to so good a subject, but because his heart was in the work. The two men, both worshippers, though in different ways and to very different extents, stood and gazed in silence on the representation of their common divinity. The one forgot, while so employed, the purpose for which he was there; the other cast to the winds all recollection of the topic which they had just been discussing. The artist stated, truly, that there could be no occasion to disturb Lady Belmore in her privacy, because the few touches that were wanting could be given as well in her absence as in her presence. The librarian heard the declaration with regret, but could not gainsay the justice of it. After feasting his eyes on the effigy of that which was ever present to his imagination, he withdrew, and passed out of the house without once remembering that he had failed to satisfy the more than curiosity which brought him there, and was still without the shadow of a clue to the discovery of which he was in search.

As he walked homewards, however, memory awoke again and again as, on other occasions, he turned over in his own mind all manner of schemes for achieving the great end of his existence. They resolved themselves into this: that day by day he should return to St Ann Street, not calling any more at No. 39, for that he felt to be useless, but watching for the egress of the person, his conference with whom had been so inopportunately disturbed, and from whom he hoped, rather than expected, to get intelligence that might be useful to him. He adhered to the determination, and spent hours upon hours day after day, now walking first up and then down the street; now planting himself at the corners of the various roads that fell into it; but never, except for a moment at a time, losing sight of the door. Had those been the days of policemen, this loitering of the same person continually in the same vicinity might have got the loiterer into trouble. As it was, he went and came, if not unnoticed, yet certainly

quite disregarded. Here and there a shop-keeper or an errand-boy would make a remark implying curiosity : " Here's this cove again ; what can he be after ? " But the reply, spoken or otherwise, amounted to this, and no more— " There's a woman in the case, that you may depend upon." Nobody interfered with him, however, or asked him what he wanted. But it seemed as if Mrs Todd had been aware of his vigilance and the motive for it, for weeks elapsed before Ann showed herself at all. At last, one Sunday morning, he saw her emerge from the area, and move away, whether towards a place of worship or not, it little interested him to surmise. He allowed her to get a considerable start of him without moving, till she abruptly turned down another street, and then he gave chase. It was too late. Though he reached the corner round which she had turned, and a long range of street lay before him, not a trace of the woman could be discovered. It seemed as if she had vanished



from the face of the earth. He could not guess whether a cellar, or an open door, or a shop, of which the shutters were only half closed as he passed it by, might have received her. All that he was sure of was that she was gone.

## CHAPTER IX.

### GROWING.

MORTIFIED by this failure, Mr Thompson determined to try the effect of another visit to the artist. It was now a fortnight or more beyond the 4th of June—the day on which the last great festival of each season was held in London society. For gay people quitted the capital, sixty years ago, as soon after the celebration of the King's birthday as possible, leaving only business men to continue their attendance at their counting-houses in the City, and public functionaries, with members of the House of Commons, to frequent their offices in Whitehall, or spend their nights in the royal palace at Westminster. Mr Thompson was

therefore little surprised when his old acquaintance Jane informed him that Mr Hogarth was not at No. 39. He did not at first understand her to say that the artist had ceased to occupy Mrs Todd's drawing-room floor, though that information came out likewise in the course of their gossip ; which, Mrs Todd having gone for change of air to Margate, Jane invited the caller to carry on with her in her mistress's parlour. How he felicitated himself upon his good-luck at last ! He accepted Jane's challenge, and skilfully led her to converse on the one subject which possessed for him the slightest interest. Had she no knowledge at all of the circumstances under which the young lady had disappeared ? Had she never heard the event spoken of by her fellow-servant ? and did she think that anything could be got out of Ann if he saw her himself ? He would gladly make it worth the while of both to put him on a sure scent. Alas ! the answers were the reverse of satisfactory. She had never heard Ann speak one word about the matter

till the other day, and then it was to say to herself that she had been charged by her mistress to give information to nobody, and especially not to Mr Thompson.

“And why especially not to me, Jane?”

“I am sure I don’t know, sir, except it be that Missus believes you to have some bad purpose in pushing your inquiries.”

“But that’s all a mistake, Jane. I mean the young lady well. I want to find out who the man is that carried her off, and to bring her back to her uncle if I can.”

“Well, I don’t think that either Missus or Ann would be easily persuaded of that.”

“Let’s have Ann up and talk to her ourselves; she will believe me, I am confident, when I explain to her how impossible it is that I can have any evil intentions.”

“Ann’s not here neither, sir; she went away only last Sunday; she sent her things before her on Saturday night, and left the place on Sunday morning.”

“Left the place!” exclaimed Mr Thompson;

"how unfortunate I am ! If I had only known she was leaving the house for good, I would have stopt her at the door."

"Did you see her go out, then, sir ?"

"Yes, I did, Jane. I had been watching for her up and down, weeks and months, and never had a chance of talking to her till last Sunday, and she escaped from me in the most extraordinary way. You know where she has gone though, don't you ?"

"No, sir ; she didn't tell Missus or me where she was going, and I never asked."

"There's an evil destiny upon me !" exclaimed Mr Thompson, after he had given Jane her tip and turned his back upon her. "I believe that I shall never see the light in this matter. What am I to do next ?"

He walked along the streets moody and disconcerted. He made his way back to Belmore House, a deeply-disappointed man, and began from that hour to experience something of what all unfortunate creatures, sooner or later, do, who allow any one particular subject to

engross their minds to the exclusion of other and more healthy changes of thought. The progress of the malady was indeed slow at the outset, as in such cases it often is. First his sleep began to forsake him. He lay awake hour after hour, building castles in the air, of which the corner-stone always rested on the success of the search on which he was then engaged, though the towers and battlements reached, sooner or later, to heaven. He saw himself, having solved his mystery and righted all her wrongs, treated by Lady Belmore as her benefactor. She gave him first her gratitude, then her friendship, then her love. Lord Belmore was somehow or another got rid of; and in a fairy castle, amid mountains and groves and running waters, he and she dwelt together, each being all the world to the other. By-and-by there got mixed up with this dream visions of marvellous success in public life. Yes, he would show the world that he was not unworthy of the prize he had won. She should never have cause to be ashamed or to regret

that she had stooped to link her fate with his. He was a candidate for a seat in the House of Commons. He was composing the speech which was to electrify the senate. He was arranging the argument which at the hustings was to sweep aside all opposition, and carry the election by storm. How the blood bounded on such occasions through his veins! How tense and acute became the strain upon the nerves and muscles of the brow! What a pressure fell just upon the top of the head, causing the eye to see dimly, making the sense of hearing grow dull. By-and-by a revulsion would occur, and then he lay exhausted, feeble, and despondent, incapable of exertion of any kind, till sleep, induced by sheer physical weakness, stole over him and refreshed his body. After this he would rise, often to find that the better part of the day had been wasted, and that his labours as librarian were so far in arrear as to prevent his making so much as an effort to overtake them.

The growth of the malady, which was just

beginning to overmaster him, went on slowly for a while. It seemed indeed as if he were himself aware that a mysterious danger threatened, for he made great efforts from time to time to counteract by violent physical exercise the morbid activity of his own thoughts. To the servants who were left in charge of Belmore House, and who had received strict injunctions to look after and be attentive to him, he gave as little trouble as possible. They prepared his meals at set hours—and simple meals they were. They kept his apartments tidy. Beyond this, and the ordinary brushing of his clothes, he exacted nothing from them. For he lived entirely alone—not always so, however, throughout the decade of which we are gathering up the scattered records, because on several occasions during that interval business brought Lord Belmore to town, and twice Lady Belmore bore him company. Lord Belmore's solitary visits brought with them no gratification to the librarian. He was indeed treated with marked kindness by his employer,



who made a point of behaving to him as to an equal—sharing with him his meals, and putting himself out of the way to converse with him in the evenings. But these attentions, so far from conciliating the object of them, only created in him a more intense dislike to the person by whom they were rendered. His diseased mind took in the idea that Lord Belmore suspected him, and was trying to get his secret out of him. Hence, though assuming an air of perfect frankness while discussing books and scientific subjects, as he was well able to do, Mr Thompson went out of his way to pretend ignorance as often as reference was made either to past events or to persons or places connected with them. When Lord Belmore told, for example, that Mr Hogarth's portrait had reached Baddlesmere, and how much it was admired, Mr Thompson never once said he had seen it, nor did he pretend to be aware that the painter was now established in a house of his own. On the other hand, Lord Belmore could not go abroad without being either fol-

lowed or preceded by his librarian. Mr Thompson took the stage daily before his lordship ordered his carriage, and, planting himself near the White Horse Cellar, watched till the equipage came up. It usually stopped at Brooks's; and in front of Brooks's the librarian took up a position. From that position he never budged till the object of his vigilance reappeared, whose steps he tracked with unwavering diligence to the Bank, to the law-courts at Westminster, to the Horse Guards, or whithersoever else he might be going. It was, however, on the Tottenham stages that he fixed his keenest gaze. And great was his surprise, and intense his mortification, to find that not so much as once during his brief sojourn in town had Lord Belmore made use of them.

Lady Belmore came up but twice in the course of the decade. Her first visit was made in the autumn of the same year which broke off her intimate connection with London life; and to Mr Thompson it brought perfect happiness. She was still the slave of one great overmaster-

ing desire, of which he, and he alone, had cognisance. She still gave him her entire confidence. Their secret consultations, though ending invariably in disappointment to her, were to him glimpses of paradise. The case was different when she came to town a second time, after a long interval. The hope which he still cherished, with her had died out, and being succeeded as yet by no loftier principle of action, its departure left her utterly desolate. She never sought to confer with him in private now. She admitted him at his own desire, rarely, to her presence. Perhaps it was this distressing change in her manner that gave to the malady, of which we have described the premonitory symptoms, its onward impulse. Be that as it may, the servants began to remark, soon after Lord and Lady Belmore left them, that Mr Thompson was not what he used to be. The library and its affairs fell into neglect. He moved about the place often speaking to himself. They heard him at night walking to and fro in his chamber, and not unfrequently de-

claiming aloud, as if to a great assemblage of people. Certainly Mr Thompson was not what he had once been ; but to say of him, already, that he was out of his mind, would have been to hazard an extravagant assertion. The balance of the intellect was unsteady ; but there needed a sharper and stronger excitement than had come over him yet, to throw it down from the equilibrium.

Such was the state of the librarian's moral and intellectual nature when a communication from Baddlesmere made known to him that his old pupils were about to make a temporary home of Belmore House : the younger, till he should have provided himself with the uniforms and appointments of a cavalry officer ; the elder, till he should have found lodgings within easy distance of Lincoln's Inn, and the more decided resorts of fashionable people. Not that Lincoln's Inn was, in 1810, the out-of-the-way place that it is now. Bedford Square, Russell Square, Lincoln's Inn Fields themselves, were still inhabited by offshoots

from the aristocracy ; by judges, some of them of the highest order ; by members of both Houses of Parliament, and by wealthy merchants. But the tide was setting steadily westward ; and Cavendish Square, Hanover Square, Harley Street, and one or two places still farther in the direction of the setting sun, were in the ascendant. The Duke of Preston possessed a noble mansion in one of these squares, and George Harris not unnaturally concluded that it would be both advantageous and agreeable to pitch his own tent under the shadow of the ducal residence. As to Charley, his stay in town would be too brief to admit of his forming any new acquaintances ; and the last acquaintance which he cared to seek—carrying, as he did, the image of fair Lucy in his heart—would be these proud Prestons. The brothers, therefore, took their places in the coach with very different notions of the future which was before them. The elder went forth to establish a place for himself in society. His fortune was secure, his rank fixed ; he had only to make

the most of these advantages, and he entered into a covenant with himself to do so. The younger was going to seek reputation at the cannon's mouth, and having achieved it, as he was sure to do, to return and throw his laurels at Lucy's feet. They had, however, this circumstance common to both in their favour, that for each a handsome sum of money was lodged in Grant's Bank for immediate use, and that on both a liberal allowance was settled. It must be their own faults entirely if they fail in the race of life.

## CHAPTER X.

### START IN LIFE.

LITTLE know the men of the present generation of the strength which England is able to put forth when called upon to try issues with an enemy worthy to contend against her for the foremost place in the world. They saw her arm, after a fashion, a few years ago to restrain, in alliance with France, the ambition of Russia, and to save Turkey. They can form no conception, from what occurred then, of the attitude which she assumed when maintaining, fifty years prior to the commencement of the Crimean war, a contest for life or death with France itself.

Over her own element she then reigned

supreme. A thousand pennants fluttering in the breeze gave her the supremacy in every ocean ; and on land, and for defensive purposes, her troops, regular and irregular—for the latter may be said to have included the bulk of her male population—fell little short of a million of men. It is true that the force available for active operations abroad was always, in point of numbers, inconsiderable. There were reasons for this which, whether we approve them or not, were held by those who administered the government at the time to be satisfactory. Having a vast empire in India to hold and to extend ; having colonies scattered over the entire surface of the globe, dependent upon her ; having Sicily to garrison, not on her own account, but for a Bourbon prince who, like the other members of his family, hated the power which afforded him an asylum,—England, it was presumed, could never, except by incurring risks that were too formidable, place anywhere in Europe more than a mere army corps in the field. The con-



sequence was, that while every town in Great Britain and Ireland swarmed with troops, Lord Wellington, in the autumn and winter of 1810, was with difficulty holding his own in the face of Massena's enormous array, and that in the Houses of Lords and Commons voices were continually heard demanding that without delay he and his handful of brave men should be withdrawn from a position which had been proved to be untenable.

Among the English counties, which in those days swarmed with troops, none presented a more imposing appearance than Kent. And among Kentish towns none could boast of a stronger and more complete garrison than Canterbury. A short mile or thereabouts removed from that ancient city, barracks had been erected upon the most approved model, and portions of each of the three arms—a regiment of cavalry, a brigade, or, as it would now be called, a battery of artillery, and two infantry battalions—filled them. It was to the cavalry regiment which lay in the barracks at Canter-

bury that Charles Harris had been gazetted. With his eagerness to join there was little to interfere in the shape of social or other attractions. London, when his brother and he arrived from Baddlesmere at Belmore House, was a desert; and had the case been otherwise, neither of them could boast as yet of having established for himself a footing within any recognised circle. Having waited, therefore, on the Adjutant-General, and learned from him that the regiment of — light dragoons might expect early service in Portugal, Charles put himself into the hands of the family tailor, saddler, bootmaker, and accoutrement-maker, and despatching his horses before him in charge of a groom from his father's stables, made ready, as soon as his uniforms should be complete, to present himself at headquarters.

It was a fine bracing morning in October, when our young cornet, overflowing with military ardour, and encumbered with a good many portmanteaus and other baggage, took his place in the yard of the Golden Cross,

Charing Cross, on the top of the Dover coach. He had made a gallant effort to secure the box-seat, that great object of contention, but was foiled. Another young man, well grown, and, like himself, of fair complexion, had been beforehand with him, and nothing remained except to take a place in front. What a magnificent team of bays, smooth-coated, clean-limbed, well put up with brass-mounted harness, stood pawing the ground as he ascended the roof! How beautifully they stepped out, after one by one the cloths that covered their flanks were withdrawn, and the coachman gave the well-known signal to start! "Mind your heads, gentlemen!" he shouted, not a moment too soon, for scarce was time allowed for the outside passengers to stoop, when, thundering through the arched passage, the vehicle sped on its way. Down it rushed by King Charles's statue, past the Admiralty, having the Horse Guards on one side, and all that remains of Inigo Jones's noble palace of Whitehall, on the other. Down they rushed without a word

spoken anywhere, for even young men going to join their regiments for the first time are usually silent at the beginning of the journey. The coachman is busy guiding his horses through the streets ; the guard is fully occupied bringing out of his key-bugle, or possibly his long tin horn, such sounds as it will emit, and the past and the future, memory and imagination, almost always divide between them the self-consciousness of the passengers, leaving none of them either leisure or inclination to disturb the reveries of his companions. So it was, at least, on the present occasion. Westminster Bridge was gained and crossed, the old Kent Road was galloped through, and the steep hill that leads to Blackheath was trying the endurance of the horses, before any attempt at conversation was hazarded anywhere, or a passing remark uttered. The coachman was the first to break the silence, with a question which he addressed to his fellow-occupant of the box-seat. " For Dover, sir ? "

" No. For Shorncliff."

"Then I'm afraid I'll lose your company before you get to the end of your journey. You'll have to take the coach from Dover to Ashford, if there be one, after we get in. I wonder you didn't choose the other line?"

"Don't we pass Shorncliff going to Dover?"

"Oh, dear me! no; we leave Shorncliff and Hythe quite on the right. You're a good ten miles from Shorncliff when you reach Dover. And you, sir?" turning to Charley.

"My point's Canterbury."

"Ah, you're all right. Both of you, I suppose, on the same errand. Food for powder—is that it?"

The young men laughed, and admitted that possibly they might be food for powder, but not if they could help it.

"Well, now, for my part," continued the loquacious Jehu, "I very much admire the spirit of you gentlemen, but I'd rather be as I am; the pay isn't *compos*."

"We won't get rich upon it, certainly," replied Charley, to whom this appeal was ad-

dressed ; “ but I think it quite *tanti* whether it be *compos* or not.”

His front-rank man, if we may so designate the youth who sat on the box beside the coachman, laughed aloud at this hit, and with a view perhaps of stopping the chattering of that functionary, asked the speaker to what regiment he belonged. As was just and fair, he repaid the confidence thus far reposed in him by specifying the corps which he was himself on his way to join. And so the youths struck up an intimacy. It grew closer and closer as the way prolonged itself, till by-and-by, when from the top of Habbledown Hill, Canterbury, with its towers and spires, and noble cathedral in the midst, lay out as in a map before them, it occurred to each, as if by common consent, to ask the other for his card. The cards were produced, and ran thus : “ Mr Charles Albanley Harris, — Light Dragoons.” “ Mr Reginald Jocelyn Harris, — Rifle Corps.”

"What Harris are you?" asked Charley, glancing from the card in his hand to the individual who presented it.

"I belong to the Belmore family; my father is Lord Belmore's brother."

"And I," rejoined Charley, "am Lord Belmore's son."

"Then we are near relations, and I'm very glad of it."

The youths shook hands warmly. It was agreed that they should as soon as possible visit one another, and that, come what might, they would try to be comrades when they took the field.

"For we are under orders for Portugal," continued Charley.

"And the first and second battalions of my regiment are there already, and I hope to go out with one of the first drafts as soon as I have got through my drill."

"Couldn't you manage to stay with me to-day? I shall sleep at the inn where the coach stops till my room is ready in barracks. But

that won't matter. You can be my guest at mess, you know, all the same."

The lads spoke as if they had been veterans, affecting quite to understand the usages of the service; yet they were prudent enough not to go beyond a little idle gasconade. Both had received orders to report themselves at the headquarters of their respective corps that day; and they came equally to the conclusion, that however agreeable it might be to begin military life under the conditions here suggested, inconveniences might arise to one, possibly to both, if they did so. Accordingly, at the Rose, where the coach pulled up to change horses, Charley alone got down, while his newly-found relative, keeping fast hold of the box-seat, was conveyed first to Dover, and subsequently, though by a different mode of travel, to his place of destination, the hut barracks of Shorncliff overlooking the pleasant seaside village of Sandgate.

Leaving the rifleman to make his *début* in the gallant corps of which he was one of the



youngest members, we will follow for the present the fortunes of his cousin, who bespoke a bed, as he had proposed to do, in the Rose ; and, having seen his portmanteaus deposited therein, set out to report himself. He was struck, as he passed up the High Street and turned thence, as he had been instructed to do, towards the main entrance into the Cathedral Close, with the entire absence of uniforms from the place. As often as he had visited Winchester or Portsmouth the town seemed to swarm with red-coats. Here, though Canterbury was the station of a considerable force, not a red or blue uniform was to be seen. He walked on, passing St Alphage Church, and coming, after a while, in sight of the red-brick building in some corner or another of which he was, for a time at least, to find his home. Still the same noticeable absence of soldiers struck him. In front of three different gates three different sentries were indeed pacing : first an infantry soldier with bayonet fixed and firelock supported ; next after him an artillery-

man, armed with a drawn sword; and last of all a light dragoon, with his carbine shouldered and his sabre tucked up so as not to interfere with his powers of locomotion. And on benches, outside their respective guard-houses, the guards themselves were lounging. He stopped at the first gate to inquire his way to the cavalry barracks, and looked in. The square beyond was dotted with squads of recruits, each of which was in its own stage of professional progress, some learning, like ducks in certain moods of mind, to balance themselves on one leg, some stepping out with marvellous deliberation, some rushing at double-quick from one species of formation into another. He walked on, and glancing into the second square saw that a kindred process was there in operation, with this difference, that the manipulation of a couple of six-pounder guns seemed to constitute the extreme goal towards which the students of military movements here looked forward. He gained the cavalry barracks last, and, turning in, found himself

amidst little knots of men, marching, facing, and slashing the air after the approved fashion of the six divisions into which the sword-exercise was in those days distributed. And pacing to and fro among the recruits went a fierce-looking officer, the lines on whose countenance told that he was past his early manhood, just as the peculiar swagger in his gait and firmness of his tone pointed him out, or would have done so to the initiated, as the adjutant. Charley felt, he could not tell why, considerably awed as he looked at this formidable personage. There was something in his general appearance a great deal more imposing than attaches to the air of a schoolmaster or a college tutor, or even to the head of the house himself. And when he stopped suddenly in his walk and confronted Charley, the young man's heart fairly failed him. Taking off his hat and making a low bow, he stated that he had come to join, and had the honour to report himself.

"You're Cornet Harris, I suppose?" replied

the officer, his countenance relaxing immediately, and his manner becoming mild almost to servility. "The colonel's out with the regiment at a divisional field-day, but he'll be back soon. Indeed I expect them every minute. Sergeant Jones," he continued, speaking at the top of his voice, and it was the voice of a Stentor, "you may dismiss the drill. And now, sir, you would probably like to see your room. The colonel got a hint from the Horse Guards to work you up as fast as possible, so that you might be able to go with the regiment. He has therefore hired a little furniture for you, and put it in, so that you may be able at once to begin drill. This way, if you please."

While the recruits, breaking off, ran helter-skelter towards their quarters, Charley followed the adjutant; and entering a block, over the front door of which the royal arms, carved in stone, were conspicuous, proceeded through a lobby, up a wooden stair, and along a wooden corridor. The room into which his guide

ushered him presented the appearance which was then common to the apartments in which it was his Majesty's pleasure that the officers of his army, when at home, should sojourn. A deal table stood in the midst ; two deal chairs, of the approved barrack pattern, were near it. The floor was bare ; the walls, like the ceiling, were whitewashed but dingy ; the woodwork, including the door, which had originally been painted a very dark brown, was chipped and gaping. Fire-irons of a ponderous kind confronted a grate cast at the Carron ironworks, and ornamented with the royal shield. And, finally, a huge coal-box, with a solitary iron candlestick, completed the stock of furniture which the liberality of the nation supplied for the use of one of its commissioned defenders. The colonel, more considerate than the barrack department, had indeed added to these things a bed with its appliances, a wash-hand stand, and the several utensils that go to make it complete. But for the use of these the officer must pay out of his private resources—

gentlemen serving the Crown being assumed, in this country, to be either quite indifferent to such luxuries, or able to provide them for themselves. Charley looked round, and could not help contrasting what he saw with the well-furnished rooms which he and other undergraduates used to inhabit at College.

"Is this my quarter?" he asked.

"This is your quarter. The colonel didn't hire a carpet, or curtains, or anything of that kind. He thought it best to let you supply your own wants when you came, if you cared to do so."

"I should like a carpet, and curtains to the window, or a blind at all events, and a few more chairs, and a sofa, I think. There can't be much to pay in the way of *thirds* from what I see here?"

"Pay! oh, you pay nothing for your room and the barrack furniture when you come into it. You'll be in luck if you've nothing to pay in the shape of barrack damages when you go out. And now you'd like to see your

horses. They arrived all right the day before yesterday; and I'm happy to say the colonel passed them at once. He's very particular, but he couldn't find a fault in either of yours."

"I'm glad to hear that. Let us go and see them."

The officers' stables were not exactly the sort of crib into which, if he had been allowed to choose, Charley would have been disposed to put a couple of well-bred, high-mettled horses. They lacked both air and light, two essential requisites in such places; and the manure, which ought to have been conveyed from them to as great a distance as possible, stood piled in heaps just under the windows. The consequence was such an atmosphere of ammonia within that Charley could with difficulty breathe. As to the groom, accustomed as he had been to the open boxes and lofty stalls at Baddlesmere, he made no secret of his agony.

"I can't answer for the horses in a place like this, Mr Charles. Jack's beginning to cough

already, and Jill won't eat her corn. I'd rather leave, sir, if you please, than bide here."

"They're not first-rate stables, certainly," observed the adjutant. "Indeed, some of our officers prefer keeping their horses in the town, though that's very inconvenient. Horses get accustomed to the place, however, just as men do. I wouldn't advise you to make difficulties, at all events at the outset."

"Do your best, Bill," said Charley to his groom. "Keep all the doors and windows open as much as you can."

"So I would, sir, only them soldier-grooms won't let me. They think horses can't be kept too warm — that a draught of air will kill them."

"That's quite true," observed the adjutant; "and we can't get the folly out of their heads. However, leave that to me."

Charles and his guide went about as this was said, and were walking back towards the mess-room, when the sound of military music, heard afar off, warned them that the troops



were returning from their exercise on Barham Downs. Charles, to whom "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war" were as yet novelties, expressed a wish to see the spectacle. His friend the adjutant led him immediately to a point whence he could command a view of the column on its march, and very striking appeared to him that military procession. First came the cavalry, headed by their brass band, their cornets sounding and kettle-drums beating. There were three squadrons of a hundred well-mounted troopers each, and Charley, as he watched them file through the barrack-gate, and by-and-by halt and wheel into line, believed, in the innocence of his ingenuous heart, that the world in arms would not be able to stand before them. Next came the artillery—a battery, less two pieces—three six-pounders and a twelve-pound howitzer, with waggons complete, all well horsed, all admirably appointed, and looking as if they could already go anywhere, and do anything. And last of all, two battalions of infantry, moving with the steadiness and precision which

was then the peculiar boast of that arm, and of which we humbly hope that the charlatanry of modern days will never deprive it. Charley drew a long breath, as one after another the several portions of the pageant seemed to melt away before him, and more than ever congratulated himself that he had been permitted to cast in his lot with the noblest set of fellows under the sun.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A FIRST MARCH.

WE pass over the early days of Charley's life in barracks. They resembled in all respects the days with which the memory of every old officer, and the experience of every young one, is and probably will be familiar till barracks disappear from the face of the earth, or are converted into factories. Charley found his commanding officer very strict in the details of duty, very agreeable at other times, ready to befriend his young officers if they showed themselves deserving of his regard, and lenient to their shortcomings only just so far as gave them the opportunity, if they were wise enough to take advantage of it, to recover themselves.

A really good commanding officer, such as Colonel Blake was universally admitted to be, is, perhaps, to the full as much respected as beloved in his regiment. Lazy men are seldom disposed to like those who won't allow them to take things easy. Shifty men naturally shrink from coming too closely in contact with persons who are intolerant of tricks, and have both the will and the power to reprove them. But all who understand what the motive power of duty is, are never so well pleased with themselves and with others as when serving under a superior who understands and acts upon it also. We have spoken of Charley Harris as neither very clever nor very amiable. His ability did not, however, fall below the average ; and his lack of amiability, as it was as much the result of circumstances as of temper, so, under the influence of the new society into which he was introduced, it gradually wore itself out. For as there is no worse school, either of manners or morals, than a bad regiment badly commanded, so there is not, perhaps, a better in any part of the world than

a good English regiment with a good commanding officer at its head. Lord Belmore had been at pains to get his son appointed to a corps of which, in these respects, the reputation stood high at the Horse Guards ; and experience soon satisfied both him and the young cornet that the estimate formed of the — Light Dragoons by those in authority was a correct one.

Life in barracks is of necessity more or less mixed up with life out of barracks. There are families in and near every garrison-town which lay themselves out to be hospitable to officers, some being actuated thereto by one class of motives, others by another. In this respect, Canterbury, and the neighbourhood of Canterbury, were not behind other places. How could they be, with Dean Andrews in the Cathedral, and such a body of canons as then surrounded him ? with Colonel Webb at Harbledown, Sir Egerton Brydeges at Lee Priory, the Knights, the Faggs, the Oxendens, the of Wildmans—all resident within easy distance

the city ? And though, as yet, the memory was green of the Bleuviad, with its good-natured sarcasm, what cared the many who escaped the lash, if the few who came under it winced and were sore ? Ah, jovial Goulbourn ! how merry had been thy gibes ere yet the cocked hat of the heavy dragoon was supplanted by the lawyer's wig ! how merry they continued to be, and how innocent too, up to thy last appearance in the court of which thou wert long the pride and ornament ! And Quillman also, and Murray, and many a soldier-wit besides—where are they now ? Gone to their rest, with the generation of civilians among whom they lived and moved their passing day—dwellers now in that land of shadows, where, if ball-rooms there be, neither dame nor knight is any more required to accept “the Fag-end of the room” as the place of honour. So let it be. Yet, in the memories of a few survivors, there are still green spots sacred to them and to their doings, which must continue to flourish, till time, which effaces all things, sweep over

and blot them too from the list of things that be.

There was for Charles Harris, as a matter of course, the usual routine of drill in all its stages. He learned, like the rest, to poise himself on one leg, and do it to admiration ; he learned to walk deliberately step by step, planting each foot to the tap of the drum ; he learned to compass, at every stride, just thirty inches and no more, except when the word was given to step short, or step out, when the pace changed, in the former case to twenty-six, in the latter to thirty-three inches. That elegant and immensely useful manœuvre called "marking time" was duly taught him ; and how to face to the right, to the left, and about, either right or left, became, ere long, as easy to him as if it had come naturally. Marching followed, in section, subdivision, and company, breaking into column, deploying into line, and what not. Then came sword and carbine exercise, and by-and-by the riding-school. Charley had always been accounted a first-rate horse-

man. There was no fence, however stiff, that he would not take—no ditch, however wide, that he would not go at—but all this served as nothing in the cavalry world to which he had been introduced. He had the whole art of equitation to learn over again: lounging barebacked, with a blanket, with a saddle; mounting and dismounting, without stirrups and with them; taking the bar, passing and repassing through the intervals, now to the right, now to the left;—all these, with the thousand and one operations besides which are required to convert a bumpkin into an accomplished cavalier—through them all he went with credit to himself, and much to the satisfaction of the riding-master. Then came drill in the ranks, when, now as a front-rank man, now as a rear, he broke from line into column of squadrons, of troops, of sections, and formed up again from column into line, advanced, and retired—the latter operation by threes about. And at last, much to his own relief, he was pronounced fit to take his proper place on



parade as a supernumerary officer, whose duty it is to do nothing. It took him three good months to achieve all this, during which hunting was prohibited, and no society beyond that of his brother officers allowed, except, indeed, in the evening. To do him justice, however, Charley never complained, far less showed signs of impatience under the trial. He went through it all like a man, and earned, in consequence, the good opinion both of the adjutant and the commanding officer, an object well worth being sought for by every youth who desires to make a successful start in his profession.

At last came the order so often wished for, so long expected, to prepare for immediate service in the Peninsula. The despatch arrived on the 30th of January; the march was appointed for the 2d of February; and the embarkation was to take place the same day at Dover, where, and in the Downs, a fleet of transports, with frigates and gun-brigs to protect them, were already assembled. Who shall

describe the delight of the young, or the more sober thoughts of the men arrived at maturity, when, on the parade that morning, the colonel read aloud to his regiment the communication which had reached him? A ringing cheer told the inhabitants of other portions of the barracks that the event so eagerly anticipated on their own account had come to pass with their neighbours; and soon the cavalry square was crowded with soldiers of the artillery and the infantry, hurrying in to congratulate their more fortunate comrades on the prospects that had opened to them. Yet there were sad hearts, too, in that gallant array—husbands about to be parted, perhaps for ever, from their wives and children; and sadder still in the rooms where soldiers' wives came forward to draw the lots which should determine whether they were to go with their husbands or be left behind. As to our young cornet, his sensations were those of wellnigh unmitigated delight. If his thoughts turned to Baddlesmere, as, after a fashion, they cer-

tainly did, it was the vicarage rather than the great house that drew them thither, though, sooth to say, Lucy's blue eyes had begun already to lose something of their brightness ; but nothing in that retrospect, if such it may be called, cast the faintest shadow over his gladness. Never had he written more joyous letters than those which announced to her, and to his mother, that his life as a soldier was about to begin in earnest. Some tender expressions found their way into both, especially into that which bade Lucy farewell. But neither she, poor child ! nor Lady Belmore, was for a moment deceived by them into believing that the writer, while he indited these affectionate regrets, was other than one of the happiest youths in the world.

“The baggage will be packed and sent off at six o'clock to-morrow morning under escort as detailed, Lieutenant Staveley to command the baggage-guard. The regiment will parade in heavy marching order at seven, and begin its march punctually at eight o'clock.” So ran

the order, in anticipation of which the barrack had been, throughout the greater portion of 1st February, a scene of considerable bustle. Waggons impressed for the purpose stood already in the square, the whole of which were pretty well laden before nightfall. To and fro brokers and tradesmen passed, some to seek payment of bills, fairly or unfairly run up; some to take over articles of furniture, either as goods purchased or as property reclaimed; some, and these principally of the Jewish persuasion, to give gold at a premium of '30 per cent for good Bank of England paper; some to ask for letters commendatory to whatever regiment might succeed the — in occupation of the place. But why linger over details like these? Soldiers of the old war do not need that they should be given; soldiers of the present day would scarcely understand them. It may suffice, therefore, to state, that to the care of the fourth squadron, which was to feed the other three at the seat of war, was committed the mess plate, with such private effects

as officers could not carry with them, yet desired to retain ; and that the last evening in peaceful quarters was spent as such evenings usually are—merrily, perhaps boisterously, by men not a few of whom accepted it as a settled thing that they might never see their native land again.

It was still profoundly dark when the trumpet sounded the *réveillé* on the appointed morning. No sluggard in his bed that day was Charles Harris. Before the notes reached his ear he had already risen, and by the light of candles, and by a blazing fire, was drinking the coffee which his servant brought him. Presently might be heard the tramp of the waggon-horses, moving upward from the gate to receive their burdens ; then the gathering of the escort, with the sharp short word of command directing the fatigue-party what to do, and the baggage-waggons where to place themselves. After that a knock at the door, and the entrance of a couple of men, by whom his portmanteaus are taken possession of and

removed out of his sight. By-and-by came the harsh lumbering sound of the waggons as they rolled out of the barrack-yard, mingling with the tramp of the mounted escort. Punctually to a minute Colonel Blake saw them start. Punctually as the barrack-clock struck seven the first post went to boot and saddle; and ten minutes afterwards, cloaked and equipped for a march of eighteen miles, 300 horsemen gathered, each troop upon its own private parade.

What a fine thing is the march of a body of cavalry, even in peaceful times! How doubly imposing when they who take part in it are known to be moving either to battle or to the seat of war! How vastly more striking is the appeal to the imagination if the march begin, as it did to-day, just as the dawn is breaking in the east! When the leading files issued from the barrack-gate that morning, they loomed in the mottled darkness like mounted giants. As the column, preceded by its band, moved along the road, the light grew stronger,

rendering each individual horseman more distinct ; while from their comrades, from the infantry and artillery, who crowded out to greet them, loud shouts arose. Shouting in reply, the cavalry rode on, till by-and-by the tramp of the horses in the streets of the old town, and the upward floating of the martial music, roused the sleepers in every chamber and called them to the windows. Kindly greetings fell upon the troops from the civilians. Many a handkerchief fluttered its farewell ; many a voice bade the soldiers God-speed. Charley lived to perform other marches than these, and to speak of them and their consequences as men usually speak of the past. But not at any time was he conscious of the stirring within him of an enthusiasm so intense as that under which he laboured while riding in the grey of that winter's morning through the metropolitical city of England.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SEAT OF WAR.

THE march to Dover was performed without accident or adventure. The two hours' start afforded to the baggage had been so well timed that only as the regiment was descending the hill at the base of which the town lies were the waggons seen wending their way in front of it. Happily, too, the weather, though cold, was dry ; and as the transports lay alongside the pier, the process of embarkation was carried on without either delay or confusion. The horses were slung one by one into their floating stables, the men took possession of their berths, the baggage was stowed in the hold, and the ships were all cleared and



made ready to cast off before the last glimmer of that short winter's day had died out. Not, however, before the morrow would the rest of the convoy, which had assembled between Ramsgate and the Downs, be in a condition to move. The evening was therefore at the disposal of the officers, except only the few whom the requirements of duty constrained to abide with their men; and they spent it as under like circumstances officers usually spend their last hours in England, the honoured guests of their comrades on the spot, who envy while they entertain them.

There were other troops than the —— Light Dragoons at that moment poured into Dover, *en route* to the seat of war. The Shorncliff and Hythe drafts for the various regiments of which Lord Wellington's famous Light Division was composed had arrived earlier in the day, and the officers in charge of these were, equally with Charley and his comrades, the guests of the corps in occupation of the Western Heights. Among the rest was Charley's

cousin, the companion of his journey from town, whom he had never seen since they parted in front of the Rose, in Canterbury, and of whom, if the truth must be told, every thought had faded from his memory. At first the young men hardly recognised each other. They met now for the first time in harness, and the blue uniform of the one operated as strongly as the dark-green array of the other to cast a sort of glamour before the eyes of both. It did not, however, last long. A brief stare, a common exclamation, a hearty grip of the hand, placed them at once again upon their old footing, and forthwith their sole subject of regret was that they were not to take their passage in the same vessel.

“Well, Reginald, at all events we shall meet when we land. You’ll never be at a loss, I daresay, to find the —— Light Dragoons.”

“Perhaps not,” replied his relative; “but one thing is quite certain,—the whereabouts of the Light Division is known to all the

army. If I don't find you, you will always be able to find me."

There was a slight laugh among such as overheard these innocent gasconadings, the purport of which all understood, though no human being cared to be offended by them. To be proud of his regiment, of his brigade, of his division, is a strong incitement to a youth to do his duty ; and the cousins fully believed, being equally without practical experience in the matter, that his own was, or would certainly become, the most distinguished regiment in his Majesty's service.

How different from what the eye is accustomed in these days to take in was, first, the assembling, and after that the onward movement, of any portion of England's commercial navy sixty years ago ! Then privateers and enemy's cruisers were everywhere on the lookout, and single ships, even of the class which constituted the East Indian trading marine, never ventured alone to sea. From time to time, on the contrary, and at fixed seasons,

fleets collected at stated points, in order to proceed to their destination under the protection of convoys, more or less powerful as the circumstances of each case might require. On the present occasion, for example, the transports which had taken in their loads at Dover got under way as soon as the early tide served, and, passing out of the harbour, lay to a mile or perhaps more in the offing, where a gun-brig, which had been told off for that particular service, tacked to and fro to guard them. There they lay, their mainsails backed, till in due time, before a leading wind, came down a frigate towards them, followed by a crowd of vessels of every build and rigging. Between that mass and the French coast a sloop of war was interposed, and behind them all, urging on stragglers and bringing up the rear, sailed a corvette. Doubtless trade suffered for all these hindrances, and the cost of detention to Government was enormous; yet the spectacle was magnificent.

Giving time for the commodore to take the



lead, the gun-brig, which had thus far lain to, braced her yards round, and the transports, following the example, put themselves in motion. It chanced that the ships in which the cousins were embarked lay, when this move took place, close to each other. The decks of both were crowded, yet from among the throng each caught sight of the other, and cheered. In a moment the note was taken up by all on board, not of these two vessels alone, but of the entire convoy. A ringing shout ascended from some thousands of voices, which, mingling with the occasional roar of a gun as frigate signalled to frigate and brig replied to brig, made itself heard far into the interior. It died away, however, ere long, and slowly and gradually one well-known object after another appeared to die away with it. By noon the well-guarded fleet was far upon its way towards the chops of the Channel.

There occurred little in the course of the voyage of which it is worth while to make a record. From time to time, as a bad sailer

fell to the rear, all the rest were required to lie to, while a messenger-sloop was despatched to hurry the sluggard onward. This she not unfrequently did by towing the laggard up to her proper station. In the distance, likewise, from time to time a strange sail appeared, which, if the cut of her rigging looked suspicious, was immediately chased. Forthwith glasses were turned eagerly to watch an operation which in every case led to no results. Once, and only once, a thrill of excitement ran through the fleet. The dawn of a new day was coming in, when two formidable vessels were observed steering full, which suddenly altered their course and bore down, as if for the purpose of cutting the convoy in twain. Immediately signals ran up to the mast-head of the commodore's vessel, which every craft bearing a pennant repeated; and, like a flock of birds threatened by a kite or hawk, all the rest spread out every possible yard of canvas, and steered in different directions. Now the vessel in which Charley had taken his passage

was one of those that carried a pennant. She had on board a superintendent of transports,—a naval lieutenant of long service ; and being painted so as to resemble a small corvette, and carrying four carronades, with two long six-pounder guns, she pushed herself forward as if about to co-operate in the line of resistance which was speedily formed and presented to the strangers. Much, however, to the disappointment of all, and especially of the dragoons, each of whom had girded on his sword and grasped his carbine, the strange sail proved, on approaching nearer, to be two homeward-bound Indiamen. They had altered their course for the purpose of putting the commodore on his guard against a French privateer which had reconnoitred them the day before ; and having done so, lowered their topsails, and resumed their homeward course.

And now the discoloration of the water amid which they found themselves indicated that they were approaching the mouth of a great river. Mondego Bay was soon passed ;

and up the channel of the Tagus, leaving one by one behind them the forts and batteries which commanded the navigation, the fleet held its course. In due time the anchorage was reached. Barges, boats, stages, came alongside to convey men and horses to shore ; and at the end of something like six weeks from the date of their embarkation, the —— Light Dragoons, with some twelve or fourteen hundred infantry, drafts for various regiments, including that of which Reginald Harris was a member, drew up in Blackhorse Square, preparatory to being dispersed among their billets. The cousins renewed their intimacy on that parade-ground. They contrived to get quarters at no great distance one from the other, and went forth together to see the sights of Lisbon, and to supply themselves with baggage-animals, and other such equipments as were then considered essential to the efficiency of subalterns themselves in the field. Little time was, however, afforded for these necessary arrangements. A fresh campaign was about to open. Massena, after eating



up everything which a devastated country could supply, found at last that the lines of Torres Vedras were impregnable, and the movements in his camp gave indication that a retreat had been determined upon. Every available man and horse was therefore called up by Lord Wellington to the front, and on the 30th of March the fresh arrivals were all in full swing, each party in the direction especially marked out for it by the quartermaster-general on the spot.

The line of march assigned to the —— Light Dragoons ran between the estuary of the Tagus on the one hand, and that range of heights which, rising and falling, covers Lisbon on the north all the way to Alhandra. It carried the little column through some striking scenery, of which the effect upon new-comers was not diminished by the evidences of war in its preparatory stages, which presented themselves at every turn. Frequent lines of carts and mules were passed, some conveying stores to the front, others returning empty. From time

to time also, just dragged out of the direct road, dead horses and other animals lay rotting. The houses by the wayside were dilapidated, though filled with soldiers and camp-followers ; and gaunt and lean groups of country people went and came among them, begging for food. For Lisbon, and its vicinity throughout a space of forty English miles or thereabouts, had gathered in the greater part of the population of that section of the kingdom ; whom the severe but necessary orders of the English General had compelled to abandon their homes, after destroying such of their effects as they were unable to remove with them. In spite, therefore, of the unceasing care of Lord Wellington, and the trade in corn and other provisions which he had already opened up with America and England, the difficulty of feeding these poor people was immense, there being left for them only such supplies as the army, with its multitudinous host of attendants, could dispense with. But if our young soldier was struck with the spectacle which encoun-

tered him on his way to Quintella, other and more animating thoughts awoke within him as he approached that point. There the right of that second line of works which interposed between the enemy and the Portuguese capital had been established. There, dominating every valley, and commanding every road, stood redoubts and batteries, with just as many soldiers to guard the guns mounted on them as to provide against a sudden emergency ; while the town itself was a desert, every available man having been moved to the front. To the front also moved the — Dragoons, passing through Alverca, and looking up at the fortified heights of Bucellas, which towered above them. Nor was any permanent halt made there. From Alverca to Alhandra, and onwards still by Villafranca and Castanheira, and across the Aruda river, the line of march lay. Then, as they pushed on, the evidences of war itself became day by day and hour by hour more manifest. Houses were now in ruins, their blackened walls being dotted with cannon-shot.

That indescribable odour which hangs for weeks over a battle-field filled the air ; and over the face of the country lay scattered broken-down carriages, belts, accoutrements, and arms. And when at last the final halt took place, just in rear of Castaxo, Charley understood that campaigning is not exactly that pleasurable and romantic series of picnics which the fancies of imaginative schoolboys represent it to be.

Meanwhile his cousin had followed a different road, and reached a little later the headquarters of his corps. He arrived just in time ; for while Charley had a day or two of leisure in which to refresh, Reginald found, immediately on reaching the bivouac, that orders were out for an advance upon Thomar. It chanced that the Light-Division and the cavalry brigade to which the Light Dragoons were attached, made that day a simultaneous movement, one in support of the other, and that their route lay by a cross-road through the defiles of the mountains. It was a terrible journey, rendered hideous in the memory of

all who took part in it by one incident in particular. There stood in one of those remote valleys a house unusually large in its dimensions. Whether it had been visited by the enemy or not there was nothing to show, for on neither side of the way were the *debris* of camps discernible; and the usual concomitant upon camps—bones and decaying animals—were absent. It appeared rather to have escaped notice. But for what a purpose! On entering it there were found about fifty Portuguese, all women and children, except one man, of whom four-and-thirty had died of hunger, and the rest were dying. The man lived, and seemed anxious still to live, though his powers were so exhausted that he was unable to eat the food which was offered to him. Twelve or fifteen women, patient and resigned, had accepted death already; yet amid their sufferings they were not forgetful of what was due either to themselves or others. They had laid out with decency the bodies of their companions in want, and now sat beside them, calmly waiting their

own fate. Poor creatures ! It probably overtook them very soon after the cousins and their men parted from them. For the rough viands—the biscuit and cooked pork, which was all that British soldiers had to offer—were to them no better than stones. They could not touch them. They died where they sat.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### IN LONDON.

LEAVING the cousins to prosecute their first campaign as they did gallantly to the end, we return to London, where the stream of life continued to flow as if wars had no existence anywhere, or were carried on, like mercantile operations, with money and without suffering.

The unexpected arrival of his ancient pupils at Belmore House produced upon Mr Thompson a curious effect. It seemed, in the first instance, to dissipate all his illusions. He greeted them cordially, talked with them of old times and bygone proceedings, and appeared to be exactly what he had ever been, only much more companionable. The three

men accordingly lived together, separating for a brief space after breakfast, meeting again at dinner, and spending the long autumnal evenings in pleasant conversation. Mr Thompson had not been absent from his duties as librarian for ten years. It was therefore very agreeable to him to hear from those who professed to speak from personal knowledge of the wellbeing of his mother. He listened also with interest to all that was said of the past and probable future of the young men themselves—of their career at school and college, and of the prospects that were before them. But when the conversation took a more domestic turn, and Lady Belmore especially chanced to be the subject of it, he became excited and uneasy. As if some spell were upon him which he found it impossible to throw off, he poured out on each occasion question after question, which they found themselves not unfrequently at a loss how to interpret. Was her ladyship tranquil? was she satisfied? was she reconciled to the inevitable? did she suffer from any secret



malady, bodily or mental, or appear to do so? No. They were not aware of the existence of any such malady. They had no reason to suspect that she was different in this respect from what she had ever been. Her habits were, indeed, a good deal changed of late. She had lost her taste for the society of clever people, and was become a great church-goer; she did a great deal of good, also, among the poor.

"Does good among the poor? Has become a great church-goer? Exactly so. It was thus foretold. It is part of the prophecy."

"Part of what, Thompson?" asked Charley.

"The prophecy," replied Mr Thompson. "It stands recorded in—oh, but I forgot. You are still in the dark about many things, and about this among the rest. And so you are going to be a soldier, Charley, and to join Lord Wellington in Portugal. And you, George, intend to become Lord Chancellor of England. Well—all right, all right! But you'll see great changes here and elsewhere before these things come to pass."

"I say, George," observed Charley to his

brother, as they mounted the staircase that night, candle in hand, "isn't old Thompson queer? Has he taken too much? or what's wrong with him?"

"Queer? I should think so! Don't you observe how restless he is, and what a peculiar expression there is in his eye? By Jove! I begin to suspect that he has muddled his brain with too much study."

This little incident occurred after the brothers had been inmates of Belmore House about a week. A few days subsequently the younger of the two took his departure, and George and Mr Thompson were left alone together. Over the deportment of the latter a striking change almost immediately passed. He became taciturn and reserved; and constantly, when of an evening they sat together, each with his book, George, on lifting his eye from the page, noticed that his companion's gaze was fixed upon him with an intensity which was the reverse of agreeable. Bearing all this for a while, George considered it expedient to advert to it at last.

"Is anything wrong, Thompson?" he asked, somewhat abruptly, one evening.

"Everything's wrong," replied Mr Thompson. "I object to being watched. I entirely object to any one playing the spy over me."

"Who watches you? Who plays the spy over you?"

"You do. You are sent here to observe my movements. I know all about it. Don't pretend to deny it—you can't deceive me. My knowledge comes from above."

"Is the man mad?" demanded George, rising. "You are not well, Thompson," he continued, speaking in a gentler tone, for Mr Thompson had risen also, and stood glaring at him fiercely. "I have seen for some days past that you are out of sorts. Let me advise you to go to bed, and we'll have Dr Sumner to see you in the morning. You have overworked yourself, that's certain."

"To bed! Why should I go to bed? I need no sleep. I never sleep. Day and night the sound is in my ears—the dove descending

and brooding over me. Yet I have a work to do, and till it be done, for me there is no rest. A good church-goer! Good—good! It will come to that at last. I daresay you are right. I do feel a little out of sorts, and bed may be the best place for me. But there's no need to call in a doctor. It will pass away—it will pass away. Good-night." So saying, he took his candle and departed.

George was brave, but to persons unused to deal with the insane there is something very shocking, almost terrible, in being brought for the first time into collision with them. They have their motives of action as well as we, and, in their own wild way, reason up to conclusions; but as both their motives and their reasoning lie quite wide of anything that our minds can take in, we find ourselves incapable of providing, when first confronted with them, against emergencies which we cannot foresee. George Harris felt all this keenly as soon as the conviction was brought home to him that the intellects of his old tutor were

damaged. He stood still after Mr Thompson withdrew till the poor fellow's footsteps sounded on the stair. He then opened the door quietly and listened. The librarian's chamber door was opened, shut, and fastened from within. Upon this he rang the bell.

"Have you noticed anything wrong of late with Mr Thompson?" he asked of the old servant who answered the signal.

"No, sir," replied the man; "nothing particular. Mr Thompson's not exactly like other people. He often lies a-bed all day, and speaks to himself, and that; but he's quite quiet, and gives as little trouble as can be. He has long been in that state."

"By Jove! John, it seems to me he's beyond that state now. I believe him to be mad. You must send for Dr Sumner to come and see him the first thing in the morning."

"If you please, sir; but I think you will find him all right in the morning. He's often queer at night; but he sleeps it off, and gets up as well as ever next day."

"Did he ever speak to you about a prophecy?"

"He never speaks to anybody that I know of about anything. He often speaks to himself, but what it is that he says, I am sure I can't tell."

"Very well, John; if you're content, I need not disturb myself. I go to my lodgings to-morrow. It won't be me that he'll brain if he gets into a paroxysm. I don't quite like leaving you and your wife at his mercy, however."

"Never fear for us, Mr George. We're used to him. He never gives us a bad word, poor man! He'll do no harm to us or to anybody."

Though by no means convinced by the reasoning of the domestic, George didn't consider it necessary to insist on having the doctor called in. He did, however, take the precaution, after retiring to his chamber, to lock the door that night; and having lain awake till past midnight, raising his head from the pillow at every sound, he fell at last into a doze, and slept soundly. He rose next morning, break-

fasted, and was gone, bag and baggage, before Mr Thompson was stirring.

It was not Mr George Harris's custom to trouble himself much about other people so long as they did not interfere with him. He made it a point never to put himself out of the way for the gratuitous purpose of serving anybody. Mr Thompson, and his state of mind and body, were alike forgotten as soon as Belmore House was left behind. He took possession of a handsome suite of apartments in Harley Street, introduced himself to Mr Williams, had his name duly entered on the books of Lincoln's Inn, and began life as a law-student. It cannot be said of him that his studies were a mere pretence. On the contrary, he read such books as Mr Williams advised him to read, attended regularly, and at stated hours, in that gentleman's chambers, and learned, like the rest of his pupils, how to draft a deed by the usual process of copying, and by-and-by of filling up the sketches of deeds which had been drafted by others. He ate the required number of dinners,

also, in hall, and otherwise prepared himself to be called to the bar. But the law is a severe taskmaster, and men who have no thought, nor any purpose, induced by necessity, of living by it, seldom give to it that exclusive attention which, at the outset at least, is necessary to success. Mr George Harris, with a coronet in the distance, and an ample allowance from his father in the meanwhile, did not feel himself called upon to sacrifice the enjoyment of the present in order to secure advancement in the future. There were more than one among his fellow-pupils, men like himself, independent in their circumstances, and looking to a Parliamentary career. With these he struck up an intimacy, and his manners being agreeable when he liked, he found in them pleasant acquaintances. In other respects his position had its good as well as its evil side. An ample command of money enabled him to provide himself with excellent horses, a smart curricule, and well-appointed grooms. All the places of public amusement in London were open to him,



including the cock-pit, the prize-ring, the cider-cellar, and suchlike. Neither of White's nor of Brooks's was he as yet a member, though he looked forward to becoming such, and had a right to do so ; and of the best billiard-rooms, and other resorts of gay men, he soon made himself free. On the other hand, his acquaintance among persons of his own rank for a while was limited. All his mother's old friends received him kindly. Mr Hogarth, by this time a man of fashion as well as a leading artist, invited him to his dinners. Mrs O'Hagan, the great Irish novelist, threw her tiny *salons* open to him. And there he met wits and celebrities in abundance. But within the charmed circle which circumscribes the high altar in the Temple of Fashion, it appeared for a while as if he were not to be allowed to penetrate. The guardians of that altar had, however, in 1811, their peculiar views of things just as they have now. They were acted upon rather by circumstances than by any well-defined rules of right, and circumstances which had been against Mr

George Harris on his first arrival in London, became, in due time, favourable to him. It happened thus :—

The opera might not be, so far as regards talent, what it is now, but it was as much frequented at the period at which our history has arrived as it is now. Stalls were indeed unknown, but the crush-room was in its glory, and the nights of Wednesday and Saturday saw pit as well as boxes crammed with ladies and gentlemen arrayed as for a full-dress party. George was fond of music for its own sake. He was fond of the ballet also, and took his place as often as other engagements would allow in a row of the pit as near to the orchestra as might be. It rarely happened that in running his eye over the house it fell upon features that were familiar to him. Mrs O'Hagan and her set greatly preferred the acted to the musical drama, and beyond her set, so far as ladies were concerned, his acquaintance had not yet extended. One evening, however, just after the curtain had risen, while the opening scene

was in progress, the bustle of a party entering a private box just over the stage, and therefore on a line with the seat which he occupied, attracted his attention. He looked up and saw, not without considerable satisfaction, that his fair partner at the Winchester ball, with her duchess mother, were among the arrivals. There accompanied them, besides Lord Claud and his sisters, two gentlemen—one old, the other in middle life, the strong family likeness between the former of whom and Lord Claud marked him out as the Duke. The younger man was evidently an acquaintance, though on intimate terms, as it seemed, with the family. To George he was an entire stranger, and, not having any very striking peculiarity in his appearance, he attracted but little of the young man's attention.

Though George instantly recognised the party in the box, he was not so immediately noticed by them. Their attention, as soon as they settled themselves, was fixed upon the stage, and it so continued till the act came to

an end, and the drop-scene fell. But amid the general stir which followed, the recognition took place. It was, or seemed to be, as cordial on one side as on the other. Lady Alice's bright eye was the first to flash an answer to his greeting. She at once drew the attention of the rest to her quondam partner and champion, and a signal from the Duchess caused George to quit his seat. He made his way through the throng, and in a few minutes found himself among them. Nothing could exceed the heartiness with which her Grace received him. Lord Claud was cordial, Lady Alice kind, Lady Mary polite. The Duke, well-bred but stately, was the one member of the family who threw the faintest dash of coldness into his reception ; and George, who was naturally more taken up with old acquaintances than with new, either did not notice this incident, or treated it as mere mannerism. As to the stranger, George scarcely observed him at all. They exchanged formal bows, and there for the present their intercourse ended.

The evening ought to have been to George Harris one of unmitigated enjoyment. We are not quite sure that in reality it proved so. The Prestons were very kind, very lively, very bright; but there was about them a disposition to slur over the past which he could not help noticing. They did not retain the same vivid recollection that he did of all that was said and done at Winchester. They appeared, indeed, indisposed to revert to the subject; and when he, naturally enough, expressed his regret that the determination of Lord and Lady Belmore to remain in the country had compelled him to begin life in London on his own account, they made no pretence of sympathising with him. His sensitive nature felt all this more acutely than he cared to acknowledge. On the whole, however, he endeavoured to persuade himself that he had been very happy in their society. He received a general challenge to come and see them whenever he felt disposed, and a special invitation to be present at a ball which her Grace was going to

give. The Duke spoke to him of his studies, commended the wisdom of the course which he had adopted, and asked whether he looked by-and-by to coming into Parliament.

“Not,” continued his Grace, “that I ought to urge this upon you, for unfortunately your family politics are not mine. But somebody or another must sit for Lord Belmore’s boroughs, and why not you among the rest?”

“I really have never thought of the line that I may take in politics,” replied George. “My father, I know, calls himself a Whig, as his father did before him; but, for my part, I hold myself free to judge of party questions for myself. If ever I go into Parliament, as I hope some day to do, I shall go perfectly unfettered.”

“And you will do right, Mr Harris,” responded the Duke, becoming more cordial than he had yet been. “In these times young men ought to set themselves free from hereditary prejudices. My family, as you are doubtless aware, had been Whigs time out of mind, but

the horrors of the French Revolution first, and the schemes of the friends of the people in this country afterwards, opened my eyes to the difference between the sound Protestant principles of 1688, and the mock liberality which means confusion in these days. Think for yourself, my young friend, and I shall be greatly surprised if you don't find out that the English Constitution is the grandest political fabric that ever man raised ; and that if it be in danger, it is more from the encroachments of the people on the rights of the Crown and the aristocracy, than from any desire either of the Crown or the aristocracy to interfere with the liberties of the people. Do you happen to be disengaged next Wednesday ? Will you give us the pleasure of your company at dinner ? We dine at six."

George was not engaged. He willingly accepted the invitation, and very much to his own surprise went home, after seeing the ladies into their carriage, better pleased with

himself in consequence of this brief dialogue with the Duke, than because of all the kind things which others had said to him throughout the two hours that he had spent in her Grace's box.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### SOCIETY.

THE dinner at the Duke of Preston's proved to be, in some sort, a political one. With the exception of George himself, the guests were professed party-men, and most, if not all of them, members of one or other of the Houses of Parliament. George did not know it at the time, but he was introduced to the more distinguished of these as a young Whig, whom his Grace expected to indoctrinate with Constitutional principles; for his Grace, though not holding office in the Administration, was, or believed himself to be, of great weight in his party, not so much because he was able to return several members, as because he laid himself out to be a sort of recruiting-

officer for Toryism. "What we must do," he used to say, "is to keep our eyes upon the men who distinguish themselves at the universities, to make sure of them by giving them access to our saloons, and bringing the ablest of them into Parliament. And especially, if we find a scion of a good old Whig house unsettled in his views, we must lay hold of him at once. Every convert of this sort is worth half-a-dozen hereditary supporters of the Constitution. Depend upon it that no party was ever kept long together unless it recruited largely from its rivals." And to the great art of recruiting his Grace accordingly applied his skill, as he himself assumed, with the best possible effect.

Among others of his guests to whom the Duke made a point of introducing George Harris, was Mr William Blarney—the gentleman whom he had seen in her ladyship's box the night when they first met in London. Mr Blarney sat for one of his Grace's boroughs. He acted as whipper-in to the party, and was rewarded for his services by holding a subordinate appointment

in the Administration, the salary of which was understood to constitute the main portion of his income. Mr Blarney was an Irishman, and had all the vivacity and humour which are supposed to be characteristic of his countrymen. George found him lively, frank, and communicative. He knew everybody present, and described them one by one, in answer to George's questions, and in his own peculiar way.

"That little man with whom his Grace is now talking—oh, that's the First Lord of the Treasury! He began life as you are doing; was called to the bar; entered Parliament, and became in the late Administration Chancellor of the Exchequer. He is now at the head of the Government, and I hope he may keep his place. But parties are much broken up at this moment. We hardly know what turn affairs may take, especially with the executive in the state it now is—the Regent trusted by nobody, and the King politically dead. Our First Lord is what the world calls very honest — that is, very obstinate, and a little narrow-minded."

“And the gentleman who is offering his arm to the Duchess?”

“That’s the greatest lawyer of the day, who first forms his judgments (and they are sound judgments), and then starts so many doubts about them that he can never be got to make up his mind unless driven to do so in a hurry. See what a sagacious countenance he has!—what a deep-set eye! what a shaggy brow! The old King had more confidence in him than in any of his subjects—except Pitt. How the Regent will behave to him, considering that their views differ uncommonly on some points, remains to be seen. Yet he, also, has very contracted views on some subjects.”

“And who may that be with a hawk-like eye and prominent features, who seems proposing to lead out the lady in black?”

“Oh, that’s a near relative of our great commander—a clever but thoroughly unprincipled man—who has spent the little he ever had of his own, and is spending his wife’s fortune as fast as he can. He is our Irish Secretary.”

“You don’t seem to have a very exalted idea of the leaders of your party?” observed George, laughing.

“I beg your pardon; I swear by them. I paint their portraits to you with all the dark shades conspicuous; because, before you throw in your lot with us, it is right that you should see us as we are. But this you may depend upon, that if we are mottled, the others are black as my hat. We are bigoted in one direction—they in another; and our bigotry has this at least to recommend it, which theirs has not—it tends to keep society together. But here comes Lady Alice. You are in immense luck. You will have not only the prettiest, but the pleasantest woman in the room to talk to at dinner.”

Mr Blarney was right. The Duke, instead of leading George to Lady Alice, conducted Lady Alice to George, and requested him to keep her in order, which he gladly promised to do. He never spent two pleasanter hours in his life than those which fled from him with Lady Alice on

his right hand. He seemed to catch from her the inspiration of wit, which was like a new sense to him. He grasped her hidden meanings, tossed them back again, and bore himself as if, up to that moment, he had lived, so far as society of clever men and women was concerned, a life of absolute isolation. The lady appeared to be not less pleased than he with the power for good which she had exercised over him. "Now take care of yourself," she said, smiling, as she rose to follow the rest of the ladies out of the room; "you have two dangers to guard against when I leave you—port-wine and prosiness. Don't indulge too much in either, especially in the last."

George promised to observe her warning, and he kept his word. He spared the wine, which circulated freely and was largely consumed. He took little or no part in the conversation, which, as it turned chiefly on men and things equally strange to him, lay wide of his powers. He could not, however, assent to the opinion passed upon it, in anticipation, by his lively partner at table. It was something quite new to him

to hear the schemes of hostile factions criticised, the qualities of this and that public man weighed in the balance, the prospects of the Government and of the nation discussed without reserve, and opinions delivered on matters of State by leading statesmen. His curiosity first, and then his interest, became roused as the conversation went forward, and he longed, but did not venture, to interrupt it by asking explanations. Explanations, however, in abundance he received from Mr Blarney, who made himself his companion in walking home ; and the impression left upon his mind was, that the sooner he made his own way into public life the better. " I'll write to my father on the subject to-morrow," he said to his mentor, as they parted. " I don't see why we should wait for a dissolution. One of the members that sits for Old Scratchum has only to accept the Chiltern Hundreds, and a vacancy will take place at once. I'll go in as an independent member. What do you think ?"

" That you could not possibly do better. I wouldn't lead Lord Belmore to suppose, if I

were you, that the people whom you met at the Prestons' were likely to make a convert of you. His lordship is not, I believe, very violent in his views, but nobody likes to hear that his own son is ratting. Be cautious how you state your case, and excuse an old stager for presuming to advise you."

George thanked Mr Blarney for his advice, and wrote to his father on the morrow, as he had proposed to do. He told of the renewal of his acquaintance with the Prestons ; of the pleasant evening which he had spent in Cavendish Square, and of his great desire to enter upon a Parliamentary career with as little delay as possible. He did not suppose that Lord Belmore expected his eldest son to practise as a barrister ; and all that was necessary to give him a sufficient acquaintance with the constitution and laws of the country could be acquired by private study. He could not pretend to be a politician in the well-understood sense of the term. As his father well knew, politics had scarcely ever formed the topic of their conversations at home, and in Ox-



ford they were tabooed. But this he saw, that a seat in the House was a sure passport into good society; and he had just experience enough of it to be desirous of knowing it better. He would be very much obliged, therefore, if his father would find a vacancy for him in one of his boroughs; and hinted that Old Scratchum might, without much difficulty, be made available.

Lord Belmore's answer to his son's appeal arrived, duly franked, by return of post. It was kindly expressed, but in substance far from satisfactory. Lord Belmore could not ask any gentleman, whom he had returned, to resign his seat in Parliament for the mere purpose of bringing in a son of his own. That would be to run counter to every principle of Whig politics. Besides, he really was anxious that his son should make himself a sound lawyer. They lived in an age of revolutions, and no human being could tell how soon the day might come when, beyond rank, or station, or money, or land, a good profession, by which he could live, would be the

most valuable of a man's possessions. Pitt had gone the circuit before he took a leading part in the House of Commons. He wished George to do the same. They must, under any circumstances, wait for a dissolution ; and before that came there would probably be time enough for George to show what was in him as a lawyer. He was glad to hear that the Prestons had been civil to him. They were not Liberals in politics—they were very much the reverse ; but so far as society went, they were the cream of the cream.

George read this letter, flung it from him, and went to Mr Williams's chambers in a rage. He replied to it bitterly, assuring his father that he neither could nor would waste the best years of his life in trying to master the intricacies of an art which he never intended to practise. If his lordship adhered to the determination here expressed, they might both find reason to repent it. He could take interest in politics ; he did not care for anything else. His lordship must of course act as he saw best.

The night of the Duchess's ball came, and

George did not forget that he had been invited to assist at it. It was a very different affair from the Assize ball at Winchester. Scores of carriages rolled in and out of the courtyard which fronted the ducal mansion. A canvassed porch, a brilliantly-lighted hall, a staircase flanked with the costliest flowering - shrubs, — through these swept dames and knights, the noblest, the most gorgeously arrayed, that London could send forth. Rooms decorated along their walls with the finest specimens of art, and glittering with the costliest furniture, received them first. Beyond these lay the ball-room, where already, when George, not without difficulty, made his way into it, the reign of pleasure was in full swing.

“ The lamps shone o’er fair women and brave men—  
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when  
Music arose, with its voluptuous swell,  
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spoke again,  
And all went merry as a marriage bell.”

George Harris had never seen anything of the kind before. He found himself constrained to stop and gaze upon the scene in silent admiration. He was so engaged, himself hidden in the

through, when the progress of the dance brought Lady Alice near to him. She had just gone down the figure, and her partner took his place at her side. George's heart sank within him as he watched their proceedings. Lady Alice's partner was not young. He had attained the full vigour of his days—perhaps was past it; but anything more perfect, as a specimen of manly beauty, it would be hard to conceive. His manner, too, was thoroughly refined—calm, gentle, entirely self-possessed, even while he threw into it just so much of deference as women love to receive, and well-bred men know how to tender. There was no levity—not even lightness—in the tone of Lady Alice's conversation now. She spoke comparatively little, but she seemed to drink in every word that her partner addressed to her; and her eyes, when she raised them to his, appeared to melt into tenderness. What ails the representative of the noble house of Belmore, that he should frown as he does on that magnificent couple? Others near him express in audible terms their admiration: he turns round

in disgust, and is making for the door when Mr Blarney encounters him.

"Going already, Harris? — what does this mean?"

"That I can't stand the crowd; that I'm nobody here; that I don't know anybody, and mean to go home."

"Not know anybody! Why, I thought the lovely Lady Alice had made you her particular *protégé*. Has there been a breach between you?"

"The lovely Lady Alice, as you are pleased to call her, has something more agreeable to attend to at this moment than quarrelling with me. Who is that she is dancing with?"

Mr Blarney looked in the direction towards which his companion pointed, and replied,—

"That's reported to be the handsomest man in London. Married men hold him to be the most dangerous. All the women throw themselves at his head. He might marry anybody he liked; but he makes no secret of his distaste for matrimony. Probably that arises from his great ex-

perience of the frailty of the sex. You need not be jealous of Colonel Protheroe, Harris. Whatever the lovely Alice may desire, she will not succeed in bringing Protheroe to her feet. He's rich—master of himself—in Parliament, and has, to my knowledge, a nice little private establishment just far enough from Westminster to be out of people's way. See! he has led the lovely Alice to a seat, and is off in search of a fresh partner more to his mind. Come along—now's your time. If you don't go in for it at once, you'll not dance with her to-night."

George saw that Mr Blarney spoke from a knowledge of facts. Colonel Protheroe was soon as closely allied with a remarkably handsome person, whom his companion described as the wife of a bishop, as he seemed to have been a few minutes previously with Lady Alice. The momentary indignation which had taken possession of the young man passed off, and he pushed his way up to the place where Lady Alice was sitting. She received him with a smile so bright, and agreed to be his partner with such

evident satisfaction, that all misgivings in regard to the past ceased even to be remembered.

“You’re in the toils, that’s clear enough,” said Mr Blarney to himself. “We’ll have you with us, sure enough, or I’m very much mistaken.”

## CHAPTER XV.

### PROSPECTS.

THE season went on to George Harris amid a round of ever-growing gaieties. Taken up by the Prestons, he was immediately sought out by all who aspired to be leaders of fashion ; and invitations to dinners, to balls, to drums and crushes, poured in upon him from all quarters. A life of this sort accords ill with severe study. His attendance at Mr Williams's chambers grew gradually slack, slacker, and then ceased. His law-books stood gathering dust on their shelves, or lay unopened on his table. He was fast degenerating into that most contemptible of all contemptible things—a man about town,—and might have done worse but for one redeeming passion.



His love for Lady Alice kept him free from the vices that most make shipwreck of our youth. For him one, and only one, of the sex had attractions. He could not sufficiently abstract his thoughts from her to take interest in gaming. He knew the good points in a horse, and liked the animal ; but for him the turf had no charms. His love for Lady Alice, however, if it kept him free from vice, so it tended in no degree to improve his temper. Even in her presence, basking in the sunshine of her smile, he was often uneasy. He could not bear to see her approached by others. He was impatient of her frank manner, except when he himself happened to be the object of it. And, in spite of Mr Blarney's assurances to the contrary, he could never divest himself of the persuasion that Colonel Protheroe and she understood one another. Why was she so much softened, so subdued, as often as that vagabond came near her ? Certainly the man was handsome ; it was understood that he was rich ; he had a good position in society ;—but all these things Lady Alice affected to hold cheap, as

clever women generally do, or pretend to do, which is about the same thing. "You men," she used to say, "are worshippers of beauty. We put no store upon it whatever. We don't undervalue rank, or money, or pleasant manners—they are all three in some sort necessary; but that which wins us, if there be anything in us at all, is fame, and especially fame achieved in the senate or the field." George turned that saying of hers so often in his mind that it became to him a sort of oracular announcement, awakening an inherent desire to distinguish himself, if he could only hit on the right way of doing so. Was any way open to him except one? No: he must give his father no rest till a seat in the House of Commons should be found for him; and then would he not work, would he not study, would he not, for her sake, strive to take a good place in that arena, where talent, if it be sustained by knowledge, never fails to be recognised?

He had arrived at this wise conclusion—not without an eye to something beyond it—when an event befell which, besides spreading conster-

nation through London, seemed for a while to threaten a complete change in the policy of England, and, as a necessary consequence, in the state of Europe. The Prime Minister was about to pass from the lobby into the House of Commons when a pistol was discharged at him, the ball from which pierced his heart and killed him on the spot. Now Mr Perceval, whatever his shortcomings in some respects might be, was the soul of his party. He knew the House of Commons well. He led it with great skill. He had managed the affairs of the regency to the entire satisfaction of the country, and commanded a considerable majority in every division. But there had gone out from the party clever men—as there were clever men within it—who were become impatient of that repressive policy as regarded Roman Catholics, and, though to a less extent, Protestant Dissenters also, of which he was the champion. To them his sudden removal opened a door of intrigue, through which they immediately endeavoured to pass into power by coalition with a section of the Whigs. What

hurrying to and fro took place forthwith among the trusted agents of parties and segments of parties! What secret conferences were held—what private and confidential notes exchanged—between the members of the Cabinet, now without a head, and the Wellesleys, the Grenvilles, and the Greys! Canning, as usual, bestirred himself, accounting no place in the councils of the sovereign above his merits. Personal antipathies interposed elsewhere to confound arrangements which, had it been possible to remove, or even to soften them down, might have led to grave results. Yet in spite of these accidents in their favour, Lord Liverpool and his friends found themselves, when the push came, in a minority. Mr Ponsonby carried his vote of want of confidence by a majority of two. The Government proposed an adjournment of the House, and next day it was announced that the heads of departments held office only till their successors should be appointed.

Amid complications of this sort, incidents used in former days to occur which affected the for-

tunes of individuals as much as they determined the issues of public questions. One such incident befell on the present occasion. In the jealousies which broke out between Lords Grenville and Grey on the one hand, and Lord Wellesley and Mr Canning on the other, one of the members for Old Scratchum gave his support to the former faction. The patron of the borough was known to be a friend of the latter faction ; and when patron and member differed, it was the etiquette in the good old times for the member, after giving his adverse vote, to resign his seat. The member for Old Scratchum was not forgetful of his duty. He lost no time in acquainting Lord Belmore with the course which he had taken, and at the same time proposing to relinquish the trust that had been committed to him. It happened that the same post brought a letter from George, reiterating the request which he had often urged before ; and his lordship, accepting it as a settled thing that George must have his own way, accepted the resignation of the recalcitrant member also. He at once communicated the

intelligence to his son. He did more. Partly because he had ceased himself to take much interest in public affairs, partly because he would not stand in the way of his son's prospects, he told George that he was free to take, as a politician, whatever line he chose; adding that, in his opinion, the differences between moderate Whigs and Liberal Tories were now so slight, that either might on a pinch support the other without the smallest loss of character.

George received this communication before he got out of bed, and read it with bounding pulses. His first thought was to hasten with it to Cavendish Square, to place it in Lady Alice's hands, and profess his readiness to enter the field of political strife under any banner which she might recommend to him. Brief as his experience of life had been, however, it sufficed to suggest to him that, so far as concerned his views upon the lady herself, no course of action would be less likely to promote them. Lady Alice, like other clever women, delighted in making her abilities felt. She would put small value on a surren-

der of opinion, or prejudice, or principle, call it which she might, so gratuitous as this. No. He would go in for a settled purpose, which he would allow her reasoning by little and little to sap. Of course he must inform the Prestons of what had happened. It would be a poor return for their marked kindness if he did not make them cognisant of the facts before communicating them to anybody else. But he should do so at his leisure, seeing the Duke first, telling him how matters stood, and insinuating that it would be almost, nay quite, impossible for Lord Belmore's son to go against the views of his family. He knew what would follow. His Grace, having exhausted his own logic, would hand over the member *in petto* to other counsellors. Among all these, only one would be allowed to shake his determination, and that one would be Lady Alice. Even she, however, must win the battle inch by inch. In the first place, her eagerness to make a convert of him would bring them often and confidentially together. There was happi-

ness in that prospect, even if nothing brighter lay beyond it. But he counted on something infinitely brighter, as, day by day, he showed himself more and more moved to give up his own settled opinions in deference to hers. George had not spent so many months in London, nor seen so much of London life, without being instructed by it. He laid down, before he got out of bed, a very judicious plan of campaign, and upon it he acted.

“So Lord Belmore has consented to bring you into Parliament, Harris? I am extremely glad to hear it. We want young men with independent minds in the Lower House at this moment. There’s no such thing as fidelity to party now; and so broken up as both sides are, you may, without the slightest impropriety, take a line of your own, as both principle and a just consideration of your own interests may suggest. I should advise you to go down for election at once.”

So spake the Duke of Preston that same day in the afternoon when George, having left his horses



in the Square, was shown up to his Grace's study, as he desired to be. The young man listened respectfully, and answered,—

“I don't think I shall go down for election till this crisis is over. My father has taken it into his head to go with Lord Wellesley, whose politics are certainly not those of our family, though he has broken with his own party. I couldn't give Lord Wellesley my support, and it may be well to avoid an apparent difference with my patron at the outset.”

“Yes, surely, unless you see your way to joining us, which I am confident you will do sooner or later, and which you can't do too soon. We hope to reverse the late decision in some degree to-morrow. But we shall want all the strength we can muster to carry on the Government. Have you ever considered the points of difference between us and the Whigs?”

“Not very narrowly, I must confess. But there's a spirit of honour which no man likes to set at nought, especially at the beginning of his career; and this, as it seems to me, must be my

guiding-star for the present. It would bring discredit on the family if men could point to Lord Belmore's eldest son and say he ratted."

The Duke was silent for a moment, looking all the while into George's face with an inquisitive stare, which the latter neither understood nor greatly relished. At last he said,—

"You will find yourself, in that respect, tolerably independent, I believe. I doubt whether a man in your position is expected to sacrifice his own interests for the sake of his father's party. I, at least, should certainly not expect him to do so; and I can't doubt that Lord Belmore, in sending you into Parliament, takes the same view of the case that I do. It might be worth your while, however, to consult Blarney on that head. Nobody can give you sounder advice than he."

"Thank you very much, Duke, but I fancy that I must decide for myself. Indeed, if I could be guided by any one else than myself, I should not look beyond your Grace for an adviser."

"You pay me a high compliment. By the by, wouldn't you like to become a member of White's?"

So soon as you take your seat in the House, you become fully qualified, and I shall have great pleasure in proposing you."

Before George could reply, a servant opened the door to announce that Colonel Protheroe was in waiting, and would be glad to see his Grace for a moment if disengaged.

"Show him in—show him in. We've no secrets, Harris, have we? and I daresay Protheroe has nothing to say to me that you mayn't hear."

Now George hated Colonel Protheroe. His gorge rose at the name of the man, and he would have quitted the room, but that the Colonel entered just as he was preparing to do so. He restrained himself, therefore, from exhibiting any outward token of disgust, and returned the Colonel's greeting with due politeness. It soon appeared, however, that, to the Colonel at least, the presence of a third party in that room was a hindrance. He replied to the Duke's demand for information, that the special business on which he had come was for his Grace's private ear, and that he would take another opportunity of stating it

when his Grace might be able to afford him a separate interview.

“Oh, I’m quite ready to do that now, Protheroe. Harris, will, I am sure, excuse us. He will find the Duchess and his friend Alice in the drawing-room, I believe—both very glad to see him. Have you heard, by the by, that he’s coming in at once for Old Scratchum. A vacancy has taken place just in the nick of time, and I hope Harris will be returned soon enough to give us the benefit of his vote at the next important division that takes place.”

“I hope he may, with all my heart,” replied the Colonel, looking with an air of patronage upon George. “It’s the best thing he can do—that I’m sure of. The quarrel in the Opposition camp has become, I understand, more bitter than ever. We’re in, or I’m much mistaken, for the next twenty years at least.”

“I don’t think that it much matters to me who are in or who out,” replied George, rising as he spoke. “However, I am in the way. Good morning, my lord. Good morning, Colonel.”

“Good morning—good morning. I say, Protheroe,” continued the Duke, “it seems to me that young man’s walking in the dark. What a fool he will be if he don’t do as we bid him! Just at this moment his vote would be worth a place to him. What do you think?”

“’Pon my life, Duke, I’ve never taken the trouble to think about him at all, or his concerns. He’s your *protégé*, not mine. I daresay he will act as you advise. But that’s not what I came to talk to your Grace about.”

What passed between the Duke of Preston and Colonel Protheroe on that occasion we are not in a condition to state. They conversed with closed doors, while George pursued his way, under the guidance of a servant, towards the drawing-room. There he found himself in the presence of a little conclave, the several members of which appeared as if, at that moment, they would have preferred not being disturbed. The Duchess, Lady Alice, and Lord Claud Tremanere were seated, the two former side by side on a sofa, the latter in an arm-chair opposite to them. They all looked as

people are apt to do who have been discussing some grave subject on which there has arisen serious differences among them, such as they had failed to reconcile. The Duchess was nervous and excited, Lady Alice angry, and Lord Claud calm but resolute, as he well knew how to be. He was the first to put on that air of conventional placidity, moreover, which passes current in society for good-humour, and he did it easily. The Duchess made an effort in the same direction, but failed. Lady Alice hardly succeeded better than her mother at the outset, but she was a person of great self-command, and held out her hand to George with apparent cordiality. No great amount of sagacity, however, is required to let a man see when he is out of place. George gathered in a moment that he was in that very undesirable condition ; and pretending that he had looked in only to make a particular announcement, he told abruptly of his own Parliamentary prospects, and moved towards the door.

“Now don’t go away, Mr Harris,” exclaimed Lady Alice, brightening up, and beckoning him

to a seat. "Do give us all the particulars. This is the first piece of good news we have heard for a long time. You know how much we need the support of good men and true just at this time, and just at this time fate sends you to give it. When does your election come off?"

"As soon as the writ can be issued, which may be done any day, if the Government pleases, but I suppose they won't hurry matters to get me in."

"Oh, but they will, though. Claud, be sure you move to-night for the writ. The nomination you can get fixed, I suppose, for any day you wish. We'll have you in time for the division after next, Mr Harris. How nice that will be!"

She spoke in a tone of such undisguised satisfaction, that George felt, he could not tell why, as if a load had been removed from his mind. He was too happy, indeed, to enter just then upon that line of mock argument which he had settled with himself to take up. He could only answer her appeal with a laugh and a shake of the head. But he did not prolong his stay, for

neither the Duchess nor Lord Claud joined in the request that he would tell them all about it ; and even Lady Alice's apparent joy, as it came like a sunbeam through the rift in a cloud, so, as the light is extinguished when the cloud reunites, it soon died out again. George Harris noticed this, and understood what was meant by it. He got upon his horse and rode away.



## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONSULTATIONS.

MORE amusing, perhaps, than edifying, were some of the electoral operations that went on in the good old times, when rotten boroughs and forty-shilling freeholders had the exclusive right of returning majorities to Parliament. Old Scratchum, for example, which sent two members to the House of Commons, contained some half-dozen narrow streets, three churches, and a court-house. The river, on the right bank of which the town stood, had long ceased to be navigable, except for barges and small sloops, which could come up as far as the wharf or quay only at full tide. Open gutters on either side of the way carried off the rain when it fell, and retained, till the floods

came, whatever impurities were thrown from the windows into the streets. The population could not exceed, at the most, if it even reached, two thousand souls, and was not increasing. It cannot be said, however, that the place was in a state of decay : it was merely stagnant. A weekly corn-market brought in the neighbouring farmers, who dealt at the shops, and held their ordinary at the Dolphin ; and a bank, reputed to be a sound one, received their deposits, and paid their cheques in local notes. Such a thing as gold was never seen, even in the bank. Silver could be had there in moderate quantities ; but the business of the district, like the business of the country elsewhere, was carried on upon credit. And credit was represented by dirty bits of paper, which passed to and fro unchallenged till they rotted away. The borough had its mayor and four aldermen ; also its town-councillors and freemen. These possessed a monopoly of the influence of the place, both local and imperial ; and they exercised it, as in duty bound, for their own advantage and to gratify their landlord.

For most of the town, with the exception of one street, which faced the quay, and consisted generally of a better class of tenements, belonged to Lord Belmore. Many an attempt had been made by his lordship and his agent to get possession of that quarter also ; but the owners of the property refused to sell. Doubtless they acted wisely in their generation. For though quite incapable of bringing in a member of their own, they had it always in their power to get up an opposition ; and it was worth Lord Belmore's while—or rather, worth the while of Lord Belmore's candidates—to buy them off from so doing, rather than incur the trouble and expense of a contested election. It was well worth their while to follow this course, because, in addition to the hundred or hundred and twenty resident freemen, there were five or six and twenty non-residents, whose votes, when the push came, could not by any means be depended upon. Some of these were indeed admirals, captains, or lieutenants, on full or half pay ; for Old Scratchum had, in the days of its prosperity, been a town

of considerable foreign trade. And though the lapse of ages destroyed its value as a port, the traditions of the past kept alive among its young men a special desire to serve in the royal navy, —to which, it is fair to add, they furnished not a few distinguished officers. These might, in the main, be depended upon as supporters of the powers that were ; and as the powers that were chanced, in 1812, to be Tories,—from admirals, captains, and lieutenants, Lord Belmore's nominee had little to expect. The rest were pushing, active, generally successful, men of business, who, finding the field too narrow for them at home, had migrated to London, or Liverpool, or Bristol, carrying all their freemen's privileges with them. The votes of these gentlemen were even more uncertain than those of the naval officers. But the proprietors of Strand Street could always count upon being backed by a sufficient number of them to deter Lord Belmore's candidate from presuming to put them off with idle promises or idler expressions of defiance.

One day sufficed to convey to Lord Belmore

the announcement that his son would gratefully accede to his proposal. Another carried Lord Belmore's mandate to his political agent, James Croitzer, Esq., banker, Old Scratchum ; and the morning of the third brought to the Honourable George Sackville Harris a requisition, signed by the mayor, three of the aldermen, and five out of eight town-councillors, praying that he would allow himself to be put in nomination for the seat that had become vacant. It was further communicated to the Honourable George, that a deputation would wait upon him in the afternoon of the Friday following (the requisition reached him on Tuesday) to urge upon him the necessity of acceding to the wishes of the freemen, and to receive his answer.

George was not quite prepared for the last proposition. He could not, of course, object to it ; but what to say to the deputation when it came, and how to treat the persons composing it,—these were problems which he found it difficult to solve. The worst of it was, too, that the deputation would represent the party in opposition ; and the only

political acquaintances whom he had formed were to a man Ministerialists. How could he advise with these ? Why should he not ? He was going into the House free to support whom he would. Yes ; but it would hardly do to make this fact publicly known,—at all events till after the election. And it would be as little advisable to make professions to the deputation which his first vote might contradict. Blarney was a man of the world. He would consult with him. He would go out and do so at once, because it might be advisable to stop the coming up of the deputation by a frank acceptance of their proffered support. There was no occasion for this. Just as he had arrived at so judicious a conclusion, Mr Blarney was announced.

“My dear Harris, I am overjoyed to find that you are really coming into Parliament. I heard the good news in Dorset Square yesterday ; and having a good deal of experience in such matters, I thought I would come and give you the benefit of my advice, if you think it worth while to make use of it.”

"I was just going to look you up, for the purpose of asking you to advise me. You've come in the very nick of time."

"There's no opposition, is there?"

"None that I am aware of; but the whole thing is new to me, and a confounded deputation is to be here to-morrow. What must I say to them?"

"That depends a good deal on the line you propose to take. Are you coming in to support us, or the Opposition?"

"You know what the Belmore politics are, Blarney, and I must, I suppose, travel in the old groove."

"That as it may be. If you've any friends elsewhere—out of the House, I mean, and in a certain quarter that shall be nameless—I wouldn't advise you to hoist the pale-blue flag prematurely."

George winced a little. He did not quite relish having anybody's confidence thrust on him, or his own rudely grasped at; but a moment's reflection sufficed to show him that, in the present instance, all that had been said must be well intended: for

his admiration of Lady Alice was too palpable to have escaped notice in any quarter. He therefore repressed the unmannerly reply that first suggested itself, and said,—

“My dear Blarney, the quarter you hint at is inaccessible to me. That confounded fellow Protheroe has a way about him that I can’t approach. If the bait you hold out to entice me into Toryism be connected with ‘a certain lady that shall be nameless,’ I am afraid it won’t do—it’s no go.”

“I never heard that Protheroe had an eye in that direction. I don’t believe he has. What makes you suppose the reverse?”

“In the first place, because her manner to him is different from her manner to every other man that comes round her; in the next, because they are a good deal more together of late than they used to be; and last of all, because there’s an impression on my mind that only yesterday he proposed, with what result remains to be seen.”

“Put all that nonsense out of your head. I won’t answer for the young lady or her fancies—he would be a bold man that did; but there are



excellent reasons why the family—and especially your friend Lord Claud, who has more influence with the Duke than all the rest—should object to the connection, if it were offered. But was the offer made? I don't believe it."

George, carried out of himself by the apparent interest taken by Mr Blarney in his affairs, gave a detailed account of his own call in Dorset Square, and of the incidents attending it. His friend heard him to the end, and then said, speaking gravely,—

"I will not pretend to deny that, so far as they go, the facts just stated by you look suspicious. Still, knowing the man and his habits, I can scarcely bring myself to believe that Protheroe has proposed for Lady Alice, much less that she has accepted him. His character is no secret anywhere, his position is only that of a country gentleman, and he is twenty years at least older than the lady. Besides, I am confident, whatever her wishes may be, that neither Lord Claud nor the Duke will consent to such a marriage. On the other hand, it's clear to me that, so far as they are concerned, you stand on the best possible

ground. Doesn't the Duke throw her in your way continually? Can you put any interpretation but one upon the way in which he dismissed you yesterday? Why should he speak of Lady Alice so pointedly as your friend?"

"It may be so—I daresay it is; but what am I to think as to the lady's feelings? They were clearly at sixes and sevens when I broke in upon them; and you can't doubt, any more than I do, that Protheroe's visit was somehow or another the cause of it."

"Very likely it was. But why jump to the conclusion that he came as a wooer. You know what a keen politician she is. What if all his business related to the vote he had given, or was proposing to give? A difference between the Duke and him would seriously compromise the influence of the party in Yorkshire."

"I hope you may be right, Blarney—I do indeed, with all my soul; for, to be candid with you, there's no sacrifice I would not make to win that girl."

"The surest way to win that girl is to go

in, wisely but manfully, for her political opinions. Why, indeed, should I hide the truth from you ? It was she that sent me to advise with you to-day. Now, then, what are we to do ?”

“Do ? Whatever she wishes. Will you stand by me when the deputation arrives ? or shall I send an express to Scratchum and stop their coming up ?”

“Don’t stop them on any account whatever. There’s nothing these people so much delight in as deputations. They get a pleasant trip at other people’s expense—at yours, for instance, for it will all go down in the bill. And there’s such dignity in the very term—a deputation ! Don’t stop them, whatever you do.”

“And what am I to say to them when they come ?”

“That you are much gratified by the confidence they repose in you : that you will go into Parliament mainly with the view of advancing their interests and the interests of the borough : and that luncheon is laid out for them in the other room.”

"So far so good. But how about civil and religious liberty, a profitless war, an unprincipled Administration, the power of the Crown, and so on?"

"Cut all that very short. Content yourself with referring to the well-known principles of your family, and your own determination to take your seat as an independent member. You don't intend that anybody should say of you 'to party he gave what was meant for mankind.' That's the safe line. It leaves you free to choose your side after you shall have had more experience in public affairs than as yet you can pretend to."

"Will you meet the deputation with me?"

"I don't think that would be wise. I am too well known to make it safe for you to be seen in close familiarity with me. An opposition would certainly be got up, and Lord Belmore might himself be obliged to throw you over. I won't show as yet, but you shan't go without support. You know Fitzgerald, don't you? He is a good deal at Preston House."

“You mean the man that sings, and is, or pretends to be, a great judge of pictures?”

“The same. Let me tell you that’s a very clever fellow. He writes for the ‘Messenger,’ and helps the party in a variety of ways. He’s well connected too—the first cousin of Lord Athlone. How he lives, nobody pretends to guess, but he is in the best society. He’ll be of quite as much use to you as I could be. He’s had great experience in electioneering, though it has never been proposed, as far as I know, to bring him into Parliament. Shall I desire him to call upon you? or will you come with me, which will be better, and call upon him?”

“I’ll go with you.”

George rang the bell and ordered his curricule. It was brought round, and the two men got into it together.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE MAN OF LETTERS.

THE point towards which his companion directed George to drive was No. 39 St Ann Street, Soho. Familiar as that locality is to us, George Harris had never before visited it. After passing, therefore, at a brisk trot along Oxford Street and through the Square, he slackened his pace to a walk, and began to look about, as it was natural that he should, for the particular number before which it was proposed to stop. He was so employed glancing from door to door, when his eye fell upon a man who seemed to be keeping watch from the corner of a cross street upon the very house for which they were making. There was no mistaking the individual. It was

the librarian from Belmore House, who instantly caught the look of recognition, returned it with an angry glare, and, facing about, fled at the top of his speed. George uttered an involuntary exclamation, which caused his companion to turn round, and ask what was the matter.

"Don't you see that fellow? Look, he's turning sharp to the right. He's gone now. Didn't you see him?"

"No; I saw nobody. What was he like?"

"Like a madman, as he is," replied George. "What, in fate's name, is he doing here? And he looked so wild, too."

"Who looked wild? Why, you look wild yourself, man. Are you quite sure you saw anybody?—for I didn't."

"As sure as I now see you. I shouldn't have cared about that, though, but for the diabolical expression in his countenance. I did quite wrong to leave him at large. He shall be seen to—as soon as——"

"Here we are," interrupted Blarney. "Don't drive past the door, and remember that your pre-

sent business is your own election, and to make yourself agreeable to a very knowing and most unscrupulous fellow."

George pulled up. Mr Fitzgerald was at home, and George and his cicerone were admitted.

No. 39 has, both in its exterior and interior, undergone few changes since last we saw it. The outer walls are as dingy as ever. There is the same narrow hall, with its oilskin covering, which leads to the same narrow and indifferently carpeted staircase, the landing-place above, and the drawing-room floor beyond. The drawing-room itself has indeed ceased to be the tidy, almost elegant, apartment that we remember. A few oil-paintings, not of the highest order, with engravings—some of them very fairly executed—have taken the place of the beautiful sketches which in Mr Hogarth's time adorned the walls; and instead of tables overspread with classical works in all languages, well bound and well kept, we have heaps of new books, novels, travels, and suchlike, piled one above another, in their paper



bindings, with newspapers scattered over the floor, or showered on every sofa—some entire, others cut into slips. Beside a writing-table with a mass of manuscripts and portfolios filled with gilt-edged note-paper and printed excisions before him, sits the occupant of this apartment, arrayed in a stiff brocaded silk dressing-gown and slippers. He looks up as his visitors enter, yet makes no movement to rise. He is evidently very busy, and not much in the humour of taking any interruption placidly.

“Do we disturb you, Fitzgerald?” asked Mr Blarney.

“Confoundedly!” was the answer. “What do you want?”

“We want your assistance at an election that’s coming off. We particularly want you to be present on Friday, when the deputation that is to wait on our candidate arrives.”

“Oh,” replied Fitzgerald, “that alters the case. I thought you had come here for gossip; and you know, or ought to know, that I’ve something else to do than gossip at this time. Could

you wait for a few minutes till I finish what I am about? The boy will be here for the copy immediately."

No objection was raised to the proposal, and Blarney and George making seats for themselves as they best could on one of the sofas, accepted the newspapers which Fitzgerald offered. Blarney, accustomed to such scenes, read what was before him. George, to whom everything was new, watched Mr Fitzgerald's proceedings with great interest. He saw that gentleman dash off a sentence or two of manuscript, then, seizing a printed slip that lay beside him, apply to his own sheet a brush dipped in paste, and stick on the slip where the paper was moist. This process went forward with marvellous rapidity, manuscript and slip succeeding one another, till at last the concoction of the article was accomplished, and the author folded it up. He rose after completing that operation, and planted himself, with his back to the empty grate, on the rug.

"Now, Blarney," he said, ringing the bell at

the same time, and giving his packet to the maid who answered the signal, "I'm entirely at your service. What's the business in hand? How am I supposed to be interested in it?"

"First of all, let me make you personally acquainted with Mr Harris—Lord Belmore's son, you know—whom you've often met, I am aware, at the Prestons and elsewhere. He's our candidate; and the place for which he is to be returned is his father's borough, Old Scratchum. It's a curious case; and will need a good deal of management."

"Are you going in against Lord Belmore?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Not at all," replied George. "I am my father's nominee; and I am not aware that opposition of any kind is contemplated."

"Then, in fate's name, why do you come here, Blarney? If there's no opposition how can there be a contest, and if there's no contest what can I be expected to do?"

"There is no opposition, and there will be no contest," replied Blarney; "but there's a more

delicate matter to arrange than either. My friend Harris takes views of things different from those of his loving parent. The Scratchum people are Whigs, or something more. Harris means to support us, and being young in such matters, he requires the countenance and advice of a clever fellow like yourself. He can't come in as an avowed Tory ; it won't do to come in as an avowed Whig. He wants to steer between Scylla and Charybdis ; and you're the man to pilot him."

"Why not pilot him yourself, Blarney ? You have at least as much experience as I in such matters."

"Because I'm known to be a Tory of the Tories ; and a word of commendation from me would secure his rejection. You are not so blown upon."

"Mr Blarney, the Tory whipper-in, is a conspicuous personage, I allow," replied Mr Fitzgerald, drawing himself up ; "but I doubt whether even his views are better understood throughout the country than those of the ' Messenger.'"

"Admitted—most freely," answered Blarney. "There's no comparison between them. If we had to go to a London constituency, Mr Fitzgerald of the 'Messenger' would be a more damaging bear-leader for our friend than I. But the Scratchum people, though they know and fear the 'Messenger,' know nothing about Mr Fitzgerald. There are scores of Fitzgeralds in England—two or three in the House; but there's only one Blarney."

"I see—I see," answered Fitzgerald; "there's a good deal in what you say. At the same time, I don't think it would do for Mr Fitzgerald of the 'Messenger' to stand beside Lord Belmore's member on the hustings. If I'm to go to Scratchum, it will be best to go *incog*. Sovereigns, when they travel, assume non-regal titles. Why should not the 'Messenger' change his name for the nonce?"

"Why not?" replied Blarney. "A rose, you know, by any other name—and so forth. What would you like to be called?"

Somebody has said, we rather think Paley,

that the first impulse with every man is to speak the truth ; and this law of nature it doubtless is which makes it so difficult for persons proposing to assume an alias to light in a moment upon a name in every respect satisfactory to themselves. Fitzgerald came evidently under some such influence, for he appealed to his guests.

"Green, Brown, or Robinson," replied Blarney ; "or, better than all three, Smith. The Smiths are ubiquitous."

"True ; but it strikes me that the intelligent and independent electors of Old Scratchum would prefer something more aristocratic than Smith. What think you of Melville, or Beauclerk, or Fitzgibbons, or Plantagenet ?"

"Plantagenet, by all means !" exclaimed Blarney, laughing. "Beauclerks and Melvilles are mean compared with Plantagenets ; and as to Fitzgibbons, I doubt whether the name has any existence."

"Oh yes, it has. Old Alderman Gibbons, before he died, prefixed the Fitz to his most respectable name, and his family retain it to this

day; and with it the baronetcy which his politics earned. By Jove! I'll be a Fitzgibbons! It sounds magnificent. The Scratchum folks will find it irresistible."

"Fitzgibbons be it then," replied Blarney; "and now for business."

To business the three gentlemen went. And it was arranged among them that Mr Fitzgerald, otherwise Fitzgibbons, should be at George Harris's apartments in good time on the day fixed.

"I expect the deputation about noon. It will, of course, look to being fed. You had better be with me early. Can you go down with me, and give me your countenance at the nomination?"

That also was agreed to; and other details being settled, the two friends rose to depart. In doing so, George faced towards the window, and immediately gave a start. Directly opposite stood staring up at No. 39 the same individual whom he had discovered in coming thither, and their eyes meeting, the same results ensued. Mr Thompson darted down the cross street, and was out of sight in a moment.

"May I ask, Mr Fitzgerald," said George, "whether you have observed any person loitering about opposite your door of late in a suspicious manner?"

"I can't say that I have," replied Fitzgerald. "Why do you ask?"

"Because, coming here, I noticed a man, whom I know to be mad, lurking close to your house. The moment he recognised me he took to his heels; and, by Jove! he has just done the same thing again. There he stood, just in front of that step, with his eyes fixed on your windows. Again he observed me when I turned round, and off he bolted as fast as he could. 'Pon my soul, I don't think it is safe."

"What is he like?" asked Fitzgerald.

"Like what he is—a dominie and a bookworm. He used to be my tutor when I was a small boy. He is now librarian at Belmore House. What in the name of fortune can he be doing here?"

"I daresay he has read something in the 'Messenger' that he didn't like," replied the



editor, "and means to tell me so on the first convenient opportunity. These are perils to which we public writers are necessarily exposed. We get used to them, however. It's not the first time I've had to answer a cartel, and I daresay it won't be the last."

The little man—for he was under the middle size—looked up proudly as he gave utterance to this piece of bravado. Blarney smiled, and observed,—

"If your adversary be as Harris represents, there won't be much chance of the duello on the present occasion. We don't fight madmen; we shut them up in lunatic asylums."

"Did you say the man was mad, Mr Harris?"

"As mad as a March hare. He must be seen to, or he'll do hurt to himself or somebody else."

"For heaven's sake, don't lose a day in getting him shut up!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, the proud expression on his countenance giving place to one of abject alarm. "If there's one thing more horrible than another, it is the idea that a mad-man has taken an ill-will to you. I shall be

positively afraid to cross my own threshold till I hear that you have disposed of him."

"But why should you fancy he has set his heart on damaging you?" observed Blarney. "You have never noticed any one loitering about, you say. Why should not this man's attentions be intended for us—for Harris or for me?"

"What could have brought him here if he had designs on either of you? He did not follow you, did he? You saw him for the first time, didn't you, when you drew up at my door? I wonder if anybody else can have noticed him about the place."

He rang the bell as he said this; and on the maid making her appearance, asked whether Mrs Todd were within.

"What do you want with Mrs Todd?" cried Blarney.

"I want Mr Harris to describe this mysterious person to her, and I want her to tell me whether she has noticed him, and how often."

Mrs Todd was within, and obeyed the summons. George gave her a detailed description

of Mr Thompson's personal appearance, which, after a good deal of thought, she took in. Yes—she did recollect him. He called at the house first, a great many years ago, when Mr Hogarth was her lodger. He had been more than once in St Ann Street since; but she could not bear in mind that she had seen him of late; certainly he had not crossed the threshold for ever so long. As to his business, of that she knew nothing. He had once asked her some questions about a young lady who lived under her roof; but she could give him no information. If he was coming about the place again, it was probably on the same fool's-errand that had brought him there before. That was all she knew in the matter.

The three gentlemen looked at one another when Mrs Todd withdrew, and, as if moved by a common impulse, burst into a loud laugh.

“So it's not to challenge you to mortal combat that the mysterious stranger haunts the neighbourhood,” observed Blarney.

"Nor to dog the steps of suspected persons like yourselves," retorted the 'Messenger.'

"A petticoat is at the bottom of it, that's all," rejoined Blarney.

"Very well, gentlemen," interposed George, "you make a capital joke of the matter, I allow; but, petticoat or no petticoat, it seems to me scarcely more prudent to play with madmen than with fire. I must see what can be done to provide for my old tutor. He's unfit to be at large."

"Shut him up, by all means," replied Blarney; "but not till we've settled the more important business of your election. On Friday at noon you'll be in Harley Street, Fitzgerald?"

"Without fail," was the reply; and so the conference ended.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### PREPARATION FOR A CONTEST.

WHILE these things went on in London, Old Scratchum was the scene of considerable excitement, which began as soon as the announcement of the coming vacancy arrived, and continued with ever-growing intensity up to the day of the election. From an early hour in each morning the manager's room in the bank received a succession of inquirers ; and regularly as nine o'clock at night came round, the best parlour in the Belmore Arms saw a select body of his lordship's friends sit down to a substantial supper, served, as a matter of course, at his lordship's expense. The banker, who this year happened to be likewise mayor, filled the chair on these occasions.

He was supported by the Vicar of St Bridget's, the Rev. Daniel Dues, a stanch supporter of the noble lord to whom he owed his preferment; by Mr Alderman Wood, timber-merchant and wharfinger; Mr Alderman Hyde, tanner and fellmonger; by Mr Tobias Scrivener, the town-clerk, and other notables whom we need not stop to particularise. The company amounted generally to ten—sometimes to a round dozen. They made themselves very agreeable to each other. Their political opinions were in all respects in accord, and they did ample justice to the viands which were set before them. Not that they were allowed to have things entirely their own way. Information that one of the members had accepted the Chiltern Hundreds oozed out—neither the mayor nor the town-clerk knew how—and the opposition in Strand Street began immediately to bestir themselves. At the head of that body, formidable because of its respectability rather than for its numbers, stood a gallant half-pay officer of the navy, who owned a small property—Swallowfield—just outside the town,

and who, both on that account and because he derived his descent from a long line of respectable burgesses, was deservedly looked up to by his brother freemen. A keen politician was Lieutenant Backstay, a stout stickler for Church and King. He had fought to maintain the supremacy of both in the contest between England and her great transatlantic offshoot, and declared himself ready, crippled as he was, to fight again in the same good cause against the world. With the Vicar of St Bridget's he quarrelled outright, in consequence of that reverend gentleman having kept his seat at a public dinner where "the people" were toasted "as the only legitimate source of power." He revenged himself for the outrage thus offered to the Crown by transferring his family from their proper parish church, and taking a pew elsewhere. He used to bank with Mr Croitzer when he first returned from sea, and continued to do so until the era of the Government of "All the talents." But Mr Croitzer, by affixing his signature to a petition praying the King not to change his Ministers,

committed an offence which, in the eye of the gallant officer, could never be forgiven. The Lieutenant first rated him soundly over his own counter for presuming to interfere with the royal prerogative, and then transferred his account to a firm in the county town. As to the corporation in general, with their town-clerk, mace-bearer, and other officials, there was no term of reproach which he was not accustomed to heap upon them collectively. They were democrats, atheists, mean-spirited slaves, who could neither act, nor speak, nor think except as their master Lord Belmore directed. But the gallant Lieutenant was an eccentric in his loves as well as in his hatreds. His animosities burned hot and fierce only at intervals. As often as an occasion of political excitement came round he became rabid. At other seasons, his personal greetings to vicar, banker, and town-clerk were frank and cordial. He would not, indeed, go back to his parish church ; he would not restore his balance to the Old Scratchum concern. To have done either would have been to make a



confession which he was never known to make in his life,—that he had done wrong. But he received the three gentlemen as usual at his table, dined with them all in return, and, except when politics came in the way, was with every one of them, as often as they encountered, hail-fellow-well-met. In like manner, his affections were bestowed with rare indifference to consistency. The Tories of Strand Street had black sheep among them, not less than the Whigs. What then? Lieutenant Backstay was quite able to distinguish between the public and private characters of friends as well as foes.

“How can you take any notice of that incorrigible blackguard Bulks?” said the Vicar on one occasion, when Mr Bulks received from the Lieutenant a shilling in the market-place. “He’ll go and get drunk upon it as sure as you give it to him. I am surprised that you should notice such a ruffian.”

“Bulks does drink, I allow, and swear, and kick up rows. His wife leads an awful life with

him, and his children are in rags. He's a great scoundrel—a great scoundrel ; but, d—n him ! he's a well-principled fellow."

Bulks was a hereditary freeman, and gave his vote and interest on all occasions as Mr Backstay suggested.

It was ten o'clock in the morning. The post came in at eight ; the letters were delivered at nine ; and among those which reached the bank on the day about which we are now speaking, was one bearing Lord Belmore's frank. It lay at the root of all the stir now in progress. Mr Croitzer no sooner made himself master of its contents, than he despatched his senior clerk (he kept two, a man and a boy) to summon Mr Scrivener to a conference. That functionary came in due time, and further summonses were issued. Mr Alderman Wood and Mr Alderman Hyde made their appearance, one after the other ; and then followed exactly that sort of consultation which takes place when the members of a meeting have arrived at a foregone conclusion.

Each undertakes to set forth and expound to the rest the one opinion in which they are all agreed, and all confirm his suggestions.

“We can’t hope to keep this matter close very long,” observed the Mayor; “but it seems to me desirable that nothing should be said about it out of this room till we get an answer from the new candidate. It’s as well to keep the borough free from excitement at this stage of the business.”

“Them’s my sentiments,” said Mr Alderman Hyde. “I likes a quiet life, I does. To be sure them Tories beant no good. They can’t hurt us, let ’em try ever so much. But they always makes a disturbance, and the longer we can defer that the better.”

“And then, gentlemen, let us remember that we are the guardians of my lord’s interests. If we let this out prematurely, the other side will begin at once to spend money; and we shall be obliged, in our own defence, to spend money too. Now I hate the treating and lavish throwing away of people’s property that goes on at election times. I’m sure I always blush for the town

when I see the voters rolling about the streets and disgracing themselves and their country in the eyes of the civilised world."

So spake the town-clerk, an attorney in moderate practice, whose emoluments were understood to be derived quite as much from the management of the Belmore estates in and round Old Scratchum as from his official salary. His abstract views on such subjects were sound; their application in practice was somewhat partial. It does not appear that they stood in the way of the quiet suppers to which allusion was made a few pages back. They certainly had no effect in keeping down the costs of agency, of which even Lord Belmore, indolent as he was, sometimes complained. They were well received, however, on the present occasion, and might have contributed towards the maintenance of a prudent reticence, but for a little incident which just then occurred. While Mr Scrivener was speaking, as became the town-clerk, slowly and with emphasis, Mr Alderman Wood looked out at the window, and, regardless of the interrup-

tion caused in the town-clerk's oration, exclaimed abruptly,—

“Holloa! here comes old Timber-toes! What the deuce can bring him into town so early?”

There was a general rush to the window, and sure enough was seen, stumping up the market-place in a very excited manner, the individual whom the alderman described as Timber-toes. Lieutenant Backstay had clearly something more than usual upon his mind. His step was quick and determined. His wooden leg rang upon the pavement as he set it down; and the look which he threw towards the bank as he passed the door, making straight towards the quay, was bold and defiant.

“I'll bet a crown the old fellow has heard the news,” observed the Alderman, following up his first chain of thought.

“It looks confoundedly like it,” replied the Mayor. “I say, Scrivener, you go out, like a good fellow, by the garden, and get between him and the place he's making for: you'll soon fish his secret out of him, if he have any; and come back and let us know.”

Mr Scrivener did as he was requested. Passing quickly through the garden, and letting himself out by a door in the wall, he had just time to advance a few paces in the direction of the market-place, when Lieutenant Backstay came swinging round the corner, and they presently met.

“Good morning, Captain; you’re early astir to-day. It’s not often the old town is honoured by your presence at this hour. Is there a change of Ministry up there in London? or are you about to get the command of a ship, or a squadron, or what not?”

“None of your impertinence, Mr Town-clerk,” replied the Lieutenant, stopping and confronting the lawyer. “None of your lubberly jokes with me! You know as well as I what brings me into town thus early. What! you thought you could throw dust in our eyes, did you? You thought we could not see or hear? You thought we had not our channels of communication as well as you? Go back to them that sent you, and tell them that we’re not going to be ridden over rough-shod any longer. The rogues have

had it their own way long enough ; the honest men mean to try for it this time, at all events."

"Try for what, Captain ? We've both rogues and honest men in the place ; but what's up between them now ?"

"Tell the most worshipful the mayor, and the reverend vicar, and all the lot of them, that we intend to show fight this time," replied the Lieutenant, moving on. "Aha !" he continued, looking back, "it was all neatly settled, wasn't it ? D—n me if it be, though ! By Jove ! I'll stand myself, if we can't get a better candidate."

So saying the loyal seaman stumped on, flourishing his cane as he moved, and wagging his head ; while the town-clerk returned to his friends in the back-parlour, and reported progress. From that moment all pretence at mystery was laid aside. Committees were formed on both sides. They who represented Lord Belmore's interests met, as was becoming, at the Belmore Arms. The Tories, acting with, rather than for, Lieutenant Backstay, hoisted their dark-blue flag over the sign-post of the Five Bells ; and before noon the note of preparation was

sounded from one extremity of the borough to another.

Lieutenant Backstay was a brave and loyal man. It may be doubted, however, whether, with all his hardihood and loyalty, he would have entered just at this time into a Parliamentary contest, had there not been an adviser near at hand, with keener wits than his own, and better reasons for the line which he persuaded the veteran to adopt. Mr Julius Deedes was the Tory solicitor of the place. His private practice, though good, scarcely came up to Mr Scrivener's. But being an offshoot of a respectable county family, he held himself to be, socially speaking, the town-clerk's superior, and was so regarded by others. He was ambitious of becoming the town-clerk's superior in other and more important respects than this. He entertained visions, in short, of effecting in Old Scratchum a political revolution, and with this view encouraged his elder brother to buy up, at much more than their legitimate value, two or three farms near the town. He himself became at the same time proprietor of several messuages within the enemy's



quarter of the borough, and having a good command of money, was ready to accept mortgages on others. It was the height of his ambition to break down Lord Belmore's paramount influence in the place, and to become himself master of half the representation. In Lieutenant Backstay, to whom he professed to look up as to his leader, he found a willing ally, and throughout the last session of Parliament they had worked quietly yet strenuously together, towards accomplishing that great end.

But the reported resignation in the middle of a session of one of Lord Belmore's members came upon them unpleasantly. Not that it took them by surprise. Mr Deedes was not a man to be taken, under any circumstances, by surprise. His sources of intelligence were excellent. He knew all that was going on in the House and out of it. And he had his candidate ready. Still the pear was not ripe—that he frankly allowed—though it was sufficiently mellowed to forbid the idea of leaving it untouched upon the tree. The same post which brought Lord Belmore's communica-

tion to Mr Croitzer, carried one for Mr Deedes from his trusted ally ; and he lost no time in despatching a special messenger to Swallowfield with a request that Lieutenant Backstay would come at once and advise with him how to proceed. How he intended to proceed he himself knew perfectly well. But it pleased the veteran to be treated as if every proposed move emanated from him ; and the veteran, quite believing that he carried the fate of the borough with him, set out forthwith to advise with his friend the solicitor.

Having parted from the town-clerk, Lieutenant Backstay made straight for Mr Deedes's office. It was situated, like the dwelling-house of that gentleman, on the quay, being, in fact, a sort of wing which the solicitor had, not long before, thrown out. The meeting of the two conspirators was such as meetings of the sort usually are. The Lieutenant, full of excitement, spoke fast, and a great deal of nonsense. The lawyer heard him out, and then, with apparent deference, suggested the proper course to pursue. He did not

think that there was much chance of their succeeding this time. He understood that Lord Belmore's eldest son was to be brought forward ; but, on the whole, he was disposed to believe that the latter circumstance would be favourable to them, in the end, rather than the reverse. Even Old Scratchum could not be expected to bear patiently the reproach that it had no mind of its own ; and though Lord Belmore might on the present occasion carry his man, the Tory solicitor felt satisfied that he would damage his own influence in so doing. Under these circumstances, and looking to what might come hereafter, he was not disposed to make a serious fight of it now.

“ For example, Captain, I should not think of putting you forward on this occasion. It wouldn't do for you to be beaten. But we must go to the poll somehow. Electors, equally with soldiers, lose heart if they are never brought to the scratch. We must fight the battle, though certain of defeat.”

“ Who'll fight it for you if I don't? There

has not been a contest in Scratchum these twenty years."

"I think I know a man who will try it. He is a stranger to you, Captain, and to the constituency too; but he is a clever fellow, and, better than any among my acquaintance, will do what we wish to be done at this crisis."

"Well, what's his name—what's his business?" replied the Captain, somewhat drily, for he had made up his mind to fight on his own account.

"His name is Borrow—his business, that of a barrister-at-law. He will be sure to make an impression on the electors, for he really is a man of talent."

"Where does he live?"

"In London. I've known him many years, and we may safely trust him."

Chagrined for the moment, the Lieutenant soon recovered his equanimity, and it was agreed between them that Mr Borrow should be written to. Meanwhile, with a view to rouse their own party and alarm the enemy, it was further settled that a committee-room should be opened in the

Five Bells, and an address drawn up, printed and circulated, calling upon the freemen not to promise their votes till they heard what could be said to them by an independent candidate. The address was soon written. It had the well-known ring of devotion to the great institutions of the country, and did not spare the abject spirit which had so long disgraced the borough. Before noon it was posted on every conspicuous place in the town ; and the town rejoiced in the prospect of a coming contest, about the issues of which, if the truth must be told, very few, even of the electors, cared one farthing.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### PREPARATIONS.

MR PRICE BORROW sat in his chambers, No. 329 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn. He sat there daily, diving down into them by the area-stair, for they were under the ground-floor, and daily attended in the court of the Master of the Rolls, whither the bulk of such practice as he had, carried him. Mr Borrow was a man of talent. His contemporaries said of him that he was an excellent lawyer; but not having any large connection among the attorneys, briefs came in for him more sparsely than he could have wished. He did not, however, allow his mind to lie fallow on that account; but filled up many an hour, which would have

been otherwise wasted, in writing for the press. By these means he made friends, such as might hereafter, he hoped, be of use to him, while at the same time he added a little to his income. Mr Borrow was crazy upon politics. From childhood he had fixed his affections on getting into the House of Commons, in the gallery of which he sat for some time, while a law-student, as a reporter for the 'Messenger.' He and Mr Deedes had been pupils of the same conveyancer, and kept up the intimacy which then arose between them ever after. Mr Deedes was therefore fully aware of the passionate craving of the man for a seat in the House, and did not fail to keep him *au courant* with his own designs upon Old Scratchum. But it's long to the saddling of a foal; and while the grass grows the steed starves. Mr Borrow toiled on at his briefs and his articles, gradually increasing the former, without abating one jot of the latter, till he found a woman with a little money willing to marry him, and then he married. From that day his imagina-

tion ran so far away with him, that he thought a great deal more of his country and its wants than of his own, and stood ready to accept the first offer that should be made to him of a seat, or the chance of it. It was at this juncture that tidings of the cross vote of one of the members for Old Scratchum reached him ; and, divining the inevitable consequence, he, without loss of time, communicated with Mr Deedes.

Mr Price Borrow had come to his chambers early that morning, having desired his old chum to write to him there ; and, sure enough, on his table lay a letter marked with the Scratchum post-mark, and charged, being a single letter, sevenpence. He opened and read it, and his face flushed. It contained a fair statement of the case ; but the special item which most stirred him was the announcement that if he chose to incur the expense, Mr Deedes and his friends would bring him forward and do their best for him. "You must



judge for yourself," continued the letter, "as to the wisdom of the proceeding. We have not the ghost of a chance this time : of that I warn you. Lord Belmore, however, is unwise enough to bring forward his own son—a mere youth, of whom none of us know anything, except that his mother is no better than she should be ; and this, it seems, may help to pave the way for a better result on some future occasion. I have not committed you by putting your name into the address. But an address is out, calling upon the electors to withhold their promises, which you may either make your own or otherwise, just as you see best."

"Of course I'll make it my own !" exclaimed Mr Borrow, springing up and pacing the room to and fro. "Throw away a chance like that ! No ; I should think not. I'll go and see Fitzgerald on the subject. The party don't know me as yet. I must get him to bring my name before the Government. Unless the Scratchum people believe that I am able to get places for

them or their sons, my chances must be *nil*, in spite of all Deedes's exertions. Fitzgerald will do more than this for me, I know."

Away he posted to St Ann Street, and, sending up his card, was immediately admitted to an interview. His business was soon stated, and the statement drew forth, in reply, a long whistle.

"Why, what's the matter, Fitzgerald? what's wrong?"

"Wrong! my dear fellow, everything is wrong. You must not ride that horse at all. It can't win."

"Can't win this time—that I daresay. I should be mad if I expected to beat the Belmores at the first tussle. But only let me make an impression, as I hope to do, and with your help and Deedes's it will go hard if I don't beat them sooner or later."

"No, you won't beat them, either now or hereafter—unless, indeed, you turn your coat; and even that wouldn't do it."

"What do you mean? Are the Belmores

ratting ? or are they going to sell the borough ? or what is it ? ”

“ They are not going to sell the borough ; and as to ratting, if that process be gone through, it won’t be at the dictation of my lord, or with his cognisance. . The fact is, Borrow,” he continued, speaking more gravely, “ you’ll be astonished when you hear it—but the real fact is, that I’ve promised my support to young Harris. Now don’t get into a passion, nor ask any questions which I am not at liberty to answer. My opinions are unchanged. It suits my interests and the interests of the ‘Messenger’ to adhere to our Toryism for the present. Yet I am not only pledged to support,—I have engaged to go down to Scratchum with Harris, and to canvass for him. There now ! I’ve told you all. You may draw any inference you please from my story, but I can’t allow you, as the Scots say, to ‘ back-speer me.’ ”

Mr Borrow grew red in the face. He rose from the chair in which he had seated him-

self, and with difficulty restraining his anger, said,—

“ You know best what you are doing, and why ; but one or other of two conclusions I must arrive at. Either you are playing fast and loose with the party, or this young Harris, whom you have undertaken to support, must be a blackguard of the first water. If he go to Scratchum as his father’s candidate, and mean to vote for us, he is a double-dyed traitor. Which is it ? ”

“ Whichsoever you please—either or neither, as best suits you. I’ve told you the truth, however, and now you must act exactly as your own judgment shall direct.”

“ By heavens ! I’ll contest the borough with that scamp if I spend my last shilling on it. And you, Fitzgerald ! you to lend yourself to a scheme like that !—I could not have believed it, had any other than yourself told the tale.”

“ My dear fellow, I’ve told you no tale, except this, that, not being at all aware of your designs upon Scratchum, I promised Harris,

whom I meet constantly at the Duke of Preston's and elsewhere, that I would go down with him, and lend' my experience in electioneering to help his inexperience. How could I possibly tell that this promise of mine would damage you? If you had told me of your purpose, I certainly should not have engaged to stand by your rival. But I can't help myself now; nor, forgive me for saying so, do I desire to do so."

"Very well, Mr Fitzgerald; we shall meet in Old Scratchum. If I had hesitated before, I am determined now, that, come what will, I shall contest the borough. And, by Jove! when I stand in the court-house of the old town, you may depend upon it that I will spare neither the moving spirit of the 'Messenger' nor his *protégé*."

"Do as you like, Borrow; only don't quarrel with an old friend till you are quite satisfied that there is cause. Bye-bye," he continued, as Mr Borrow, bowing stiffly, retired towards the door. "We shall meet again at Philippi!"

Mr Borrow went down into the street in a rage, and was pursuing his way homewards, an angry man, when he found himself suddenly confronted by an individual whom he could not say that he knew, but of whom it seemed to himself as if he ought to have retained the recollection. The person in question knew him, however, and addressed him by his name.

"You are Borrow of Emmanuel. I know you. What brings you here?"

"I am Borrow of Emmanuel, certainly; and come here about my own business. Who are you, and by what right do you stop and question me?"

"By the right of old acquaintance, for the reason that I would befriend you. Beware how you cast in your lot with those who, when the fourth seal is opened, shall try to hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains. Know you not that the Spirit and the bride say, Come? What dost thou here?"

"If you be in your right senses, and really

know me, say who you are. If you be an impostor, I give you notice that I am not going to be imposed upon or bullied."

"Borrow, I am no impostor," replied the other, calmly. "I was once Thompson of your own college—the humble servitor; what I am now I cannot tell myself. But whatever I may be, don't neglect the warning that I give you. Avoid the house from which I have just seen you come out, and make no common cause with him who dwells therein."

"Thompson!—oh, now I remember you perfectly; you are a good deal changed, though. Where have you been since we parted, and what are you doing?"

"I have been where I heard a great voice as of a trumpet, and saw a book written within and on the backside, and sealed with seven seals. I am doing the work of Him that sent me, and it is one of vengeance deferred, yet sure. You look surprised, but all this is quite true. We need not speak of it at this moment, however. Tell me about yourself and about him."

"About whom?" asked Borrow, beginning to see that the poor fellow with whom he was conversing was out of his right mind.

"Him—he that dwelleth there. What is your business with him?"

Mr Borrow would have passed on if he could without further parley, but that was impossible. Mr Thompson stood directly in his front, and besides that there chanced to be no other creature in sight, he had no wish to make a scene, far less to do his unfortunate acquaintance an injury. He therefore tried to lead him out of the wild train of thought into which he seemed to have fallen by telling him the exact truth. It had an astonishing effect upon the listener. He became rational in a moment, and entered into all Mr Borrow's plans as if they really interested him.

"So Mr Fitzgerald is playing you false. It is exactly like him. I know him, though he does not know me. A greater scoundrel does not live. When do you go down to Scratchum?"

"In a very short time, I suppose, but the



exact day I can't tell. That will depend upon the issuing of the Speaker's writ. You can easily inform yourself on that head, however, if you be anxious about it, by reading the Parliamentary intelligence."

"And he goes down too?"

"Yes; so he says. I have no doubt he will. He has his own ends to serve, of course—curse him!"

"Yes, the curse is on him. The temple of God and the altar, and they that worship therein, have been measured, and he is not among them. Fear thou him not, his doom is fixed."

So saying, Mr Thompson moved aside, and, crossing the street, left Mr Borrow free to pursue his way. He did so, not a little shocked by the spectacle which he had just witnessed. "That poor fellow is not fit to be left at large," he said to himself as he proceeded. "I wonder if he has any friends. If I knew where they lived I would let them know the state he is in."

The eventful Friday came, and with it,

punctual to the hour named, the deputation from Old Scratchum presented themselves in Harley Street. Mr Croitzer, the mayor ; Mr Scrivener, the town-clerk ; Mr Alderman Wood, and Mr Alderman Hyde, made up the deputation. They were received with great politeness in Mr George Harris's drawing-room by that young gentleman, and by another whom he introduced to them as his friend, Mr Fitzgibbons. It is not worth while to describe in detail what passed on the occasion. Everybody who has either been solicited to become a candidate, or has formed one of the body conveying the request, knows how complimentary both sides are. There was, however, this slight deviation from the common course of events that day, that while the deputation dwelt with becoming pride on the consistent adherence of those whom they represented to the principles of civil and religious liberty which a corrupt Administration had done its best to break down,—the individual appealed to confined his observations in reply almost exclusively to the

requirements of their old town, and his determination, if possible, to bring about their accomplishment. The general result was, however, satisfactory to all concerned. Mr Fitzgibbons assured the mayor that he had known Mr Harris from a boy ; that in all his acquaintance there did not live a more honourable or high-minded man ; that in making choice of him to represent them in Parliament the electors of Scratchum exhibited the highest wisdom ; and that, whatever their expectations might be, he would take upon him to assure them that they would not be disappointed. Mr Fitzgibbons went further by shaking hands with the deputation all round, and jocularly proposing to go down himself, in order to share the triumph of his friend, and witness the noble enthusiasm of so enlightened a constituency. As was to be expected, the door of each member of the deputation was, in a figure of speech, thrown open to the eloquent Fitzgibbons, and the whole party thereupon adjourned to luncheon.

The deputation returned to Scratchum perfectly satisfied that they had done the right thing; and gratified the constituents by describing, possibly exaggerating, the courtesy of their reception. Meanwhile, however, the Tories had not been idle. An opponent to the Honourable George Harris was fairly in the field, and Mr Deedes and Lieutenant Backstay pledged themselves in his name that he would go to the poll, and keep it open to the latest hour permitted by law. Alas! alas! Old Scratchum could not in those days boast of a single newspaper of its own. The county town itself supported only two, and these made their appearance weekly. But if what is called the press did little to rouse the passions of the free-men, squibs flew about by handfuls, and posters were busy day and night sticking up and pulling down bills of a most inflammatory nature. It must be confessed that in this species of warfare the Tories were superior to their rivals. Lord Belmore's family history was not kept back. Doubts of the validity of

his marriage, and, as a necessary consequence of the legitimacy of the new candidate, were freely thrown out, and mayor, and alderman, and town-clerk, and every member of the town-council, if he came at all up to the standard of rectitude that was raised for him then, could be nothing less than a swindler and a rogue.

The town was thus divided against itself, and its inmates were in a state of great excitement, when an open landau, drawn by four greys, was observed one afternoon to be approaching the entrance of the main street at a smart pace. As the carriage neared that point, the crowd whom the incident had brought together saw that horses and postboys were equally bedizened with dark-blue ribbons, and that beside a strange gentleman, who, like himself, wore a dark-blue bow on his left breast, sat Mr Deedes. Here, then, was the Tory candidate. Here was the man who had the courage to show himself in open hostility to the corporation, and who, if he did nothing else for the place, would at all events cause a good deal of money to be spent

in it. What a shout the mob set up! Not once in the memory of the existing generation had such a thing as a contest taken place in Old Scratchum. No wonder that the people, whether freemen or serfs, were gladdened by the prospect thus opened to them. A stranger hearing the commotion could have arrived at no other conclusion than that the people recognised their deliverer, and that Mr Borrow, for he it was who had taken time by the forelock, must carry all before him. A stranger, however, so judging, would have deceived himself—that was all. Mr Borrow, being a prudent man, had indeed stolen a march upon his rival. He took the coach as far as the county town, where Mr Deedes was ready to receive him; and thus, though posting only nine miles or thereabouts, got the start of George Harris, who posted all the way from town, by a few hours. Hence his triumphal entry into the borough; hence the enthusiasm with which his chariot-wheels were followed down through High Street to the Quay; and hence the shouting multitude

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which watched him pass over Mr Deedes's threshold, and stood to hear the speech which he addressed to them from Mr Deedes's window. But the speech was still in progress when suddenly the cry arose of another open landau looming in the distance, which, as it approached, was seen to be drawn by four bays, each of them resplendent in flowing bunches of ribbon of the palest blue. In a moment the Quay, or Strand Street as it was more correctly called, became a desert. Away to meet the newcomers ran man, woman, and child ; and with exactly the same display of enthusiasm which had greeted Mr Borrow on his arrival, were the Honourable George Harris and Mr Fitzgibbons conducted to the bank. The market-place is a decidedly better position for a crowd than the Strand. People can hear better, formed in rows and fronting a balcony, than when spread to the right and left of it ; and just as hearty were the cheers which marked their approval of Mr Harris's utterances as those which had seemed to assure Mr Borrow of the support of the elec-

tors. As the shades of evening set in, however, the unanimity which in daylight appeared to have established its reign, gave place by degrees to a contrary spirit. Hostile cries began to be raised ; rival public-houses began to be crowded. Mr Bulks, a huge freeman and a staunch Tory, was very boisterous on one side ; Mr Jingles, the beadle of St Bridget's, was equally boisterous on the other. And round the hospitable boards of Mr Croitzer in the market-place, and Mr Deedes in Strand Street, the *élite* of both parties gathered to swear eternal fidelity to their respective candidates, and to the principles which they professed. It was but the beginning of a process which throughout many days led to an expenditure of liquor which was enormous, and to not a few broken heads. What a blessing to a small town—what a glory and a pride to a large one—that it has a right to be made from time to time the arena in which hostile factions shall meet and worry one another !



## CHAPTER XX.

### THE CATASTROPHE.

THROUGHOUT the better part of a week a strong canvass agitated Old Scratchum from end to end. The rival committee-rooms received and sent out influxes and effluxes of visitors ; and the hospitalities of the candidates at every public-house in the borough were profuse and indiscriminating. To the credit of the guests on such occasions, let us not forget to add that the hostile factions, meeting and parting, pelted each other with bad names only. Another peculiarity in this contest deserves also to be put on record. Whether designedly or by accident, the canvassing parties never encountered in the streets, and their retainers received,

in consequence, no encouragement to vindicate the honour of their respective chiefs by breaking each others' heads. At last came the day of nomination, and a great day it was. Flags floated from numerous windows ; many knotted together were festooned from one side of the street to the other, and bands of performers on clarionet, bassoon, and big drum—how got together it would be hard to say—discoursed from an early hour the most discordant music. As to the bells of the various churches, they jangled out of tune as if the ringers had but partially recovered from the effects of the debauch of the previous night. These, however, were but the preparations for things more important. At nine o'clock the public crier began his perambulation of the borough, warning the freemen of the call that was about to be made upon their patriotism, and charging the inhabitants at large, in the name of the worshipful the mayor, to keep the peace. And punctually as the clock struck ten the doors of the court-house were thrown open.

And now began in earnest the business of the day. While the mayor, as returning-officer and chief magistrate, was marshalling his procession — his mace-bearer, his borough-officers, his town-crier—and the rival candidates moved in order, followed each by his chief supporters from their respective committee-rooms towards the court-house, a tumultuous crowd, which had long beset the common door of that edifice, rushed in, yelling and struggling, and occupying in a moment the body of the hall. There was no mistaking the purpose that sent them there. Nine out of ten cared as much about the issue of the contest as if it concerned the inhabitants of another planet; but they were all bent on exercising the privileges of free and independent Englishmen. They came to applaud their favourites, to censure those whom they disliked, and to gibe and jeer one with another. The mace-bearer no sooner showed himself on the dais, approaching it from the magistrates' consulting-room, than the fun began. The mayor came next, and took his seat amid

mingled cheers and yells. The aldermen were received for the most part with indifference—a joke on the peculiarity of each calling forth loud laughter. The town-clerk was greeted with a storm of hisses, which, however, he bore with marvellous equanimity. By-and-by arrived the candidates—Mr George Harris, supported by his committee, placing himself on the mayor's right ; Mr Price Borrow being content to take, with his adherents, the left of the returning-officer. What yelling and shouting followed the appearance of these gentlemen ! It was manifest enough, also, that the tide of popular favour ran dead against the Belmore interests. “No dictation here !” “No nonsense for us !” “Go home, young Harris !” “We don't want the like of you !” “Success to old Timber-toes !” “He's the man for our money !” “Borrow for ever !” “Never think of paying !” A loud laugh rewarded this exhibition of popular wit, which was immediately responded to from the other side by puns upon the popular member's ante-name and

profession. "We won't have Borrow at no price!" "Take him away!" "We don't want lawyers in Parliament!" "We've too much law already!" These, and similar utterances, accompanied by howls, cat-calls, and whistles, filled up the interval that elapsed while the chief actors in the coming drama dropped in, one by one, and took their proper places on the stage. At last the town-crier commanded silence, and the mayor rose to tell the electors that a grave responsibility was upon them, and to request that to the speakers who were about to introduce the candidates to their notice, a patient hearing would be given. This done, and the Speaker's writ read, things fell into their natural course. Mr Alderman Wood had the honour to propose, the Rev. the Vicar of St Bridget's to second, the Honourable George Harris as a fit and proper person to represent this ancient borough in Parliament. His principles were the well-known principles of a nobleman whom every burgess held in the highest respect, and therefore in strict agreement with

those of the electors of Old Scratchum. Both gentlemen were listened to with but slight interruptions, though the hissing prevailed considerably over the cheering when they sat down. It was not so when Lieutenant Backstay stepped forward to address the meeting. Personally popular, he commanded the sympathies of men of both parties ; and his fluent sailor-like denunciation of the bondage in which a certain noble house contrived to keep the town, drew forth loud cries of assent. Mr Deedes also, by a skilful repetition of the same key-note, managed to neutralise, in part at least, the hostility, in a vast majority of cases as unreasonable as it is groundless, which men in the station of life to which the voters in boroughs usually belong entertain for gentlemen of his profession. But the tug of war ensued after the candidates themselves stood forward. George Harris had learned his lesson well. He had, besides, at his elbow a capital prompter, his not unfrequent references to whom did not escape the notice of the other

side. And, on the whole, he managed, by a skilful use of platitudes, to keep tolerably clear of committing himself to any decided line in politics. He sat down, therefore, well pleased with himself, and, if little cheered by the crowd below, overwhelmed with compliments from the leading men by whom he was surrounded. It was now Mr Price Borrow's turn to address the meeting, and the effect of his speech was enormous.

Mr Price Borrow did really possess a fair share of natural eloquence. He understood his subject likewise, and made others understand that the constitution of these realms was the noblest political structure ever reared by the wit of man. . All this, however, he might have done even better than he did it without producing any marked effect upon the special audience to which he addressed himself, had he not been able to interlard his wise saws with some telling personalities. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have not heard one word from my honourable rival to which, holding the opinions

that I do, I cannot honestly subscribe. He has spoken of the necessity of guarding the liberties of the people. I am here to defend them against any attempt to override or coerce them by aristocratic influence. He has alluded to the constitutional prerogatives of the Crown, and the wise restraint which is put upon them by the Houses of Parliament. I likewise maintain that, without the advice and consent of Parliament, the Sovereign of these realms can do nothing. The representative of the house of Belmore seems to me to have studied in a school of politics which is new to his family, and will go to the House of Commons, if you send him there, at least as determined a Tory as myself.”—(“No, no; Mr Harris is no Tory. He is a friend of the people, as all his fathers were.”)—“Mr Harris not a Tory? Why, then, do I see sitting near him, and prompting him when he is at a loss what to say, a Tory of the Tories—the complete bond-slave of the present Tory Government?”—(“Name, name!”) “Name!! To be sure I will, if you press me.



Meanwhile, let me ask whom you take that gentleman to be—that gentleman, there, on my honourable rival's left, who can't or won't look me in the face, though I bow to him, as I do now?"

A great hubbub arose here. Mr Alderman Wood shouted at the top of his voice, "No personalities!" Mr Scrivener, the town-clerk, suggested, in a very audible whisper, that there were limits to licence even at electioneering times. And the mayor, in his quality of chairman of the meeting, bawled out "Order!" looking fiercely all the while at Mr Borrow. Mr Borrow stood immovable, though silent, till the tumult subsided, and then said, "I am quite in order, Mr Mayor, and again ask whom you take that gentleman to be sitting near you?"

"Take him to be? Mr Fitzgibbons to be sure—a-a-a gentleman of the highest respectability, sir. This is not the first time that I have had the honour of having Mr Fitzgibbons near me; and you must allow me to say that

you go far beyond what is becoming or admissible, in trying to cast a stain upon his reputation."

"I cast no stain upon his reputation. I only speak the truth when I tell you that his name is not Fitzgibbons, and that he is a very clever and well-known contributor to a Tory newspaper, which you probably all read—the 'Messenger.' Why he comes here under an *alias*, it is for him, not for me, to explain."

If a shell had fallen upon the platform it could not have caused greater consternation among the persons assembled there. Mayor, aldermen, town-clerk, and all the rest, turned their eyes in mute astonishment upon the man with two names, who, however, took the matter coolly, and rose, with a smile upon his countenance, to reply. But before he had time to utter a word, a voice from the body of the hall exclaimed, slowly and loudly, "An end is come—the end is come! it watcheth for thee! behold, it is come!"

George Harris started to his feet. He re-

cognised the voice in a moment, and sending a rapid glance over the crowd below him, pointed in the direction where a tall man dressed in black was standing. "Stop that person!" he cried in great excitement. "Don't let him escape. He is a dangerous lunatic. Mr Mayor, I call upon you to have him arrested and taken care of." The warning was given in vain. Before the Mayor had time to act upon the suggestion, while as yet the suggestion itself was incomplete, a violent agitation in the crowd showed that they too had heard the words of doom, and that they shrank from touching the person who had spoken them as from one inspired. Without a single hand being raised to detain him, Mr Thompson—for it was he—walked deliberately down a lane made for him by the people, and passing out at the further door, disappeared.

It was well for the contributor to the 'Messenger,' and perhaps for his friend the candidate too, that this interruption to the business of the day occurred when it did. Public

attention was so completely diverted by it from the matter in dispute between Mr Borrow and the Mayor, that the latter was able to ask for a show of hands without demanding any explanation either from Mr Fitzgerald or George Harris. Mr Fitzgerald understood too well, however, the nature of the scrape into which he had got, to face its probable consequences. Amid the excitement attendant on this proceeding, he therefore made a hasty retreat into the council-chamber, and through the council-chamber into the street. But as it was yet early in the day, and he did not care either to shut himself up in his hotel, or to risk rough questioning by mobs, he made his way along a deserted lane, and was conducted by it to the river-side. The tide had just reached the full, and was beginning to turn. Its ebb was therefore slow and sullen, giving to the body of water that passed along the aspect rather of a wide dirty ditch than of a running stream. Not a tree or shrub grew upon the banks, which were steep and precipitous. On the side where the

town stood there stretched out a succession of douns or sand-hills, scantily covered with coarse herbage and intersected with sandy ravines. On the other side rich alluvial fields spread themselves out, over which a heavy crop of corn, whitening to the harvest, now waved. Fitzgerald saw little in such a scene to entertain or draw him out of himself, yet he walked on and on, cursing his own folly as he went, till he had left the town far behind. What business had he in this most rotten of all rotten boroughs? Did he care one straw whether it sent Whigs or Tories to the House of Commons? Were his interests mixed up in the most remote degree with the contest now in progress? And yet he had been ass enough, not only to make himself a party to it, but to do so in such fashion as must inevitably tell against him, be the issues what they might. "D—n them all!" he exclaimed aloud, unable any longer to restrain himself. "I've worked for them these twenty years, spinning my brains till there's scarce a sub-

stantial fibre left ; and what have I got by it ? They *fête* me ; they ask me to their parties ! A great honour truly, with the full consciousness of which they have on all possible occasions striven to impress me ! But place, pension, or other means of subsistence, when the powers which they pretend to admire break down—as sooner or later they surely will—such substantial marks of approval as that it never enters into their heads to offer. D—n them all ! say I. If it weren't too late I'd change my manner of life even now. It's quite impossible that I could change it for the worse."

Fitzgerald had penetrated by this time deep into the sand-hills. The noise of the town was quite shut out, and from the spot where he halted to give vent to his feelings, not an object could be discerned except the sky above and the dull sluggish water below. Down into that sluggish water he gazed intently, as if discovering in its profitless progress towards the ocean a fit emblem of the sort of career which he

was himself running. To what good resolutions, if any, the reverie might have carried him, had further time been afforded for its indulgence, it is hard to say; but suddenly, as if risen from the earth, there stood beside him a tall powerful man, whose presence he appeared to feel almost before their eyes met. The stranger was dressed in black. There was a wild expression in his countenance, from which Fitzgerald involuntarily shrank; and the tones of his voice when he spoke were deep and sepulchral.

“Said I not truly? spake not the Spirit through me? O man of sin! the day of reckoning hath overtaken thee! The end is come! It watched for thee long; behold, it is come!”

A fierce grasp falling upon the neck behind, a convulsive but ineffectual struggle to shake it off and turn round, a push or blow delivered with resistless violence, and over the steep bank, down into the muddy river, went the unfortunate journalist. One strong effort nature

made to assert herself,—one rising to the surface, that a shriek might be uttered, and both arms lifted up for the help which came not and could not come, and then slowly, with the ebbing tide, swept onwards the body, which the waters refused to render up for many days, and for which no one searched.

“The first angel hath sounded!” cried the murderer, as he gazed upon his handiwork; “yea, the second, and the third, and the fourth! Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”



## CHAPTER XXI.

### FLIGHT.

SOME regret, real or pretended, not unmixed with surprise, was expressed that day by the mayor of Old Scratchum because of the absence of Mr Harris's friend from his dinner-table. Something was said by George to account for an incident in regard to which it might have puzzled himself to say whether he was more distressed or relieved by its occurrence. But the general conclusion at which the body of the guests arrived was this,—that a foolish trick had been played off upon the borough; that one of the parties to that trick, ashamed of the figure which he cut, had levanted; and that, however necessary it

might be to condone the outrage for the present, the persons playing it ought to receive a caution before quitting the place to avoid similar escapades in future. For though the Belmore influence was enormous in the town, it might be shaken; and the enemy, in the shape of Mr Deedes and the one-legged lieutenant, were a great deal too much in earnest not to make the most of the opportunity afforded them of shaking it. Meanwhile, however, things went on pretty much as if Mr Fitzgibbons, or Fitzgerald, or whatever his name might be, had never existed. Handbills appeared, indeed, next morning, calling upon the free and independent electors to mark their sense of the insult to which they had been subjected. And a few who had been shy of pledging themselves to either candidate, whether moved by the eloquence of that appeal or otherwise guided, went over to the other side and voted for Mr Borrow. But the result was never doubtful. Of the hundred and forty-five burgesses and freemen with

whom it rested to choose a representative for the place, a hundred and three polled for the Honourable George Harris. The remaining forty-two, of whom rather more than half were non-residents, registered their votes for the stranger.

There followed upon this the usual winding-up of all such affairs — public thanks and public protestations; the successful candidate declaring that the present was the proudest day of his life; the defeated one, that he had every reason to be satisfied with his reception, and would certainly contest the borough again on the first opportunity. The gallant Lieutenant also spoke out with his accustomed energy, shivering his timbers but he would yet deliver the place from thralldom, and rejoicing in the fact that the Belmore majority was less on the present than on any former occasion by not fewer than seven votes. As to Mr Deedes, he assured his fellow-townsmen that they had made themselves the laughing-stock of the whole world; and that if ever men were sold,

deceived, and grievously outraged, the electors of Old Scratchum were these men, and this they would find out by-and-by, when it was too late. On the other hand, there was marked reticence among the victors, neither the proposer nor the seconder of the successful candidate offering a single word of congratulation in the court-house to him or to the free-men. But this did not stop either the chairing or the feasting, both of which went off with marvellous *éclat*. And on the morrow the Honourable George Harris, M.P., after a grave remonstrance from the mayor, got into his barouche alone, and amid hearty cheers from his constituents, most of whom were still more than half drunk, drove away.

What was Mr Thompson doing all this while? Why came he to Old Scratchum at all? Whither was he now going, and in what frame of mind? Mr Thompson came to Old Scratchum under the influence of the same spell which had been upon him more or less ever since Lady Belmore took him into her

confidence. In one of his furtive visits to St Ann Street, Soho, he had seen Mr Fitzgerald come out of the house round which his own interests gathered, and immediately recognised in him the person who, nine or ten years previously, had insulted Lady Belmore in Hanover Square. Into his disordered mind there entered at once the conviction that it was appointed for him to avenge that insult, and that the spirit which moved him to execute a righteous judgment would, sooner or later, suggest both the time and the occasion. Day by day he haunted the place, sheltering in shops and lanes and by-streets; and day by day he dogged at a distance, without ever coming into personal contact with him, the doomed man. This earnest desire to do some particular thing, but to do it only under circumstances which may never come at all, seems to be a sure concomitant on the overthrow of reason. How admirably our great poet demonstrates this fact in his delineation of the character of Hamlet! Opportunities to fulfil

his promise to the ghost present themselves continually to the Danish Prince, yet they fall not in with his special humour. So also the journalist was in Mr Thompson's power over and over again, yet he suffered him to pass uninjured. He would watch, follow, curse, and turn away again; but he never struck a blow. He was so employed when George Harris and Mr Blarney paid their first visit to No. 39. He was on the same scent when Mr Price Borrow, returning from his interview with the great man of the 'Messenger,' encountered and conversed with him. And under the conviction that the way was made plain to him at last, he took his place on the night mail that passed through Old Scratchum for a more distant terminus, and reached the town just in time to be present at the nomination on the morrow. There was wit enough in him still to make him understand that, after uttering the solemn cry of which we have elsewhere spoken, it was unsafe for him to remain longer in the town-hall. He passed

out of it, therefore, as has been shown ; and neither knowing nor caring whither he went, he wandered away down among the sand-hills. From one of the ridges he saw Fitzgerald moving along the bank of the river. He recognised and stole upon him. All that followed followed in the natural course of events. It was decreed that Fitzgerald should die by his hand. A whole volume of prophecy, now for the first time thought out, unfolded itself before him, and he had no desire except to act as it was determined that he should do. He moved so stealthily upon his victim as to preclude the possibility of offering resistance. With the issues of that encounter the reader is already acquainted.

Whither went the deluded creature then ? For a few moments nowhere. He stood upon the high bank, and watched the struggles of the drowning man—not with any misgiving, not with any pity, not even with satisfaction, but in a state of delirious excitement. He was sure that he had done the right thing. He had heard the voice of the archangel, and

obeyed. He was the prophet Elijah come again in the flesh to make the water do what, in a previous state of existence, fire had done at his bidding. At last his true work was begun ; and he shouted aloud the words, which we have elsewhere placed upon record, " Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound ! " Then turned he and fled, as men flee from danger close at hand, for he knew that Jezebel the queen had sent to him the message, " May the gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy life like the life of him by to-morrow at this time."

We may not presume to trace the working of that disordered spirit. It would be perfectly futile to tell minutely whither it carried the man himself. Enough is done when we state that for three days and three nights he was on the tramp ; and that like Elijah—whose soul he believed himself to inherit—he avoided all this while the haunts of men, and as much as possible any encounter with



his kind. The latter object it was not, indeed, practicable always to attain. He had set his face in a particular direction, and could not avoid traversing, from time to time, a turnpike road, or coming suddenly on a farmhouse or a cottage. But in either case his first thought seemed to be how best to escape recognition and to flee from the presence, if it were even of a child. Neither hedge nor ditch stood in his way on these occasions. He crashed through the former, indifferent to the damage that was done to his clothing ; and plunged into the latter, if it were too wide to be vaulted over, scrambling up the farther bank. For three whole days he thus scoured across the country, eating only of the heads of unripe corn and raw turnips. Sleep never visited his eyelids all the while, and what little rest he took was invariably taken under the shrub or bush which bore, to his diseased imagination, the nearest resemblance to a juniper-tree. He had a great mission before him, and could take no rest till it should be fulfilled.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### NEW LIGHT.

It is Sunday morning—the morning of a Sunday in July. The church-bells are ringing for service at Baddlesmere, but very few parishioners answer to the call ; while towards a huge brick building, which has sprung up of late on the village green, and over the main entrance to which the word “Bethel” is carved in stone, multitudes of men, women, and children are trooping. Among others, very plainly dressed, but attended by Mrs Jones and her maid Louise, Lady Belmore moves in that direction. Her religious impressions, it appeared, had gone on deepening from day to day ever since her sons left her. The quiet liturgy, beautiful and

touching, seemed to lose by degrees its hold upon her sympathies. The vicar's sermons—simple, practical, plain—ceased to satisfy her cravings. Even the active work of benevolence, though never intermitted, brought no soothing in their train as they used to do. She yearned for something more, and at last she found it. Mrs Jones it was—the housekeeper—who first ventured to suggest that her ladyship might do worse of a Sunday evening than go and hear worthy Mr Jabez Growler. She hadn't a word to say against Mr Cox—far from it. He was a good Christian man, she quite believed, in his own way ; and the poor and the rich were full of his praises, and the praises of Mrs Cox and the young ladies. “ But you see, my lady, he reads his sermons, and written sermons don't seem to come from the heart like ; and then he is all for what he calls good living, which means works, and makes very little of faith, and never once speaks about the new birth, without which, you know, my lady,

we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Now Mr Growler is just the opposite of all this. He preaches like a man inspired. He could fill a chapel ten times the size of the little room where we now meet. And he shows us how we must be born again quite wonderful. I think, my lady, that if you heard him only once you would go and hear him always. He does stir us up—that he does, like the sound of a trumpet.”

“But I certainly should not think of leaving my parish church and becoming a Dissenter. That would do Mr Cox greater wrong than if I had never gone to church at all. Besides, I doubt whether Mr Growler’s preaching would suit me.”

“A Dissenter! No, no, my lady; it would never do for such as your ladyship to become a Dissenter. I wouldn’t be a Dissenter myself. But I finds it a deal pleasanter to go to chapel of a Sunday evening and hear a good sermon than to read till I fall asleep, or else do worse

by gossiping in the servants' hall. I think your ladyship would like Mr Growler's preaching."

Lady Belmore did not act on this recommendation all at once. She shrank from coming into personal contact with vulgar people, and could not think of a Dissenting minister except as supremely vulgar. There was nothing to offend her taste in conversing with the poor, especially as she came to them, and was by them received as a benefactor; but to sit at the feet of a man neither well born nor regularly educated, and to be taught by him—against that her spirit revolted. The more she thought the matter over, however, the less her conscience seemed to approve this conclusion. Had not the first teachers of Christianity been all men of humble origin? Were their words the less powerful that they had received no regular university education? What was this repugnance of hers to receive instruction from a Dissenting preacher but a suggestion of that pride which it was her duty to trample under foot? Lady Belmore, like most of the fine

ladies of her age—whether they happened to be scathed as she was, or still held their own in the estimation of the world—was profoundly ignorant of the first principles of the religion which she professed. She and they equally went to church because it was considered the right thing to do so ; but wherein the Church of England differed from the religious communities that had gone off from her, or what claim she had upon their reverence — both as an apostolic institution and as the religion of the State—they were no more capable of explaining than they were able to account for the influence of the moon upon the tides. That it was in a very great measure the fault of the clergy that this amount of ignorance prevailed in the land half a century ago, no one, it is presumed, will now deny. But there the ignorance was ; and of all enticements to fanaticism and extravagance, none operates half so powerfully upon minds in the state at which Lady Belmore's had now arrived as the lack of power, from sheer lack of

knowledge, to give an account of the faith that is in them. A woman uninstructed in the first principles of the creed which she professes, being at enmity with the world and little satisfied with herself, is pretty sure, if there be no one near to handle her discreetly, of running into one or other of two extremes. The religion which soothed her for a while, being a calm religion, ceases to fill up the measure of her longings, and she either casts it aside, relapsing into practical unbelief, or she becomes a wild fanatic.

The Sundays which, when first she began to give up portions of them to attendance at church, seemed to inspire Lady Belmore with new thoughts, and to sustain her in her work of benevolence throughout the week, ceased by degrees to retain their influence over her. What she seemed to gain at the two public services, she lost when the evening set in. The boys were gone. Lord Belmore was as abstracted and solitary as ever. He neither joined her in her visits to the house of prayer,

nor took the smallest interest in what she did with herself after she returned to her home. Sunday evening and Monday evening, and every evening in the week, was now spent by her alone, except when, in summer, she strolled over to the vicarage, a practice which did not long survive the discovery of her son Charles's boyish predilection for Lucy. She read all the sermons on which she could lay her hands, including those of Dr Blair, then in the zenith of their popularity, and she got up from the operation as little strengthened and comforted as when she sat down to it. It was when the burden of this vacuity lay with most weight upon her soul that Mrs Jones's suggestions carried with them their greatest force, and at last they prevailed. One evening in the winter, many months after her sons had gone from her, she called for Mrs Jones, and offered to accompany her if she proposed to attend Mr Growler's service that night. Mrs Jones was on the point of setting out to attend it. She made haste to bring her ladyship a warm



cloak and bonnet, and the two set out together to be present in the little room where, the housekeeper reiterated over and over again, as they made their way down the avenue and on towards the village, "her ladyship would, please God, hear the gospel, if she had never heard it before."

Whatever it may have been which her ladyship heard that night, she was delighted with it. The preacher—a sickly young man, having, as it seemed to her, the stamp of death upon his brow—spoke with an earnestness that sent every word uttered by him direct to her conscience. She was startled, agitated, alarmed, soothed, by turns, and went away, when the simple service came to an end, in a state of strange bewilderment. The congregation had, indeed, been very small and very humble. Some eighteen or twenty persons—labouring men and their wives—more men, however, than women—composed it; but their demeanour throughout was that of people who had come to pray and to be

taught, and who believed with all their hearts what the preacher told them. More than once, during the extempore prayer and at sermon, they testified to the effect produced upon them by audible murmurs; and when the hymn was given out, they sang at the very top of their voices—a great deal more mindful, as it seemed, of what the words conveyed than of the harmony. On the whole, it was a scene which could not fail to make a deep impression upon a nature so excitable as Lady Belmore's had of late become; and she forthwith devoted herself to the promotion of dissent in the parish with as much eagerness as, only a year or two previously, she had laid herself out to minister to the physical wants of her poor neighbours, and encourage them to attend the ministrations of the vicar.

Lady Belmore did not understand the meaning of the term moderation. She went to church regularly every morning still, and not unfrequently in the afternoon also; but she never failed to present herself, punctually as

the clock struck six, as often as Sunday evening came round, in the little Bethel. She introduced herself to the preacher, also, after she heard him for the second time, and overwhelmed him with compliments. Nor did she restrict herself to words. She found, on inquiry, that he served three other chapels besides this at Baddlesmere, and that the income derived from the whole, including a payment of twenty pounds from the central fund of his sect, amounted to forty-five pounds. She insisted upon raising his salary for Baddlesmere alone to fifty pounds, and asked only in return that he would open his chapel one spare evening in the week besides Sunday. It soon got wind that my lady had taken up the Baptist minister. His small room became in a short time too narrow to contain half the people that flocked to be taught by him. She proposed to build him a new chapel, and found no difficulty in persuading Lord Belmore to give £500 towards the good work. But when she further hinted that

it would be a great gratification to her, and might operate a change for the better on the whole family if she were allowed to invite Mr Growler to her table, his lordship point-blank refused. "No, no, Augusta. Go to chapel as much as you please. Give the man money to build him a preaching-house; but I must positively decline to receive him as my guest. Besides, what would Mr Cox say? It is but yesterday that you shed on him the light of your countenance; and now you are running wild after a Ranter."

"Ranter or no Ranter, my lord, Mr Growler speaks words that I wish with all my heart had been spoken to me years ago, and that you would listen to now."

"Very good; go and hear him. I don't object to that; but I do object most positively to receive the man into the list of my personal acquaintance."

The compromise thus proposed was accepted, and the foundation-stone of the new Bethel was about to be laid. A great gathering of

gentlemen in black, with unctuous countenances and very dirty nails, attended the ceremonial, as a matter of course. My lady was equally of course requested to spread the mortar and give the stone the settling knock ; and psalmody of the richest kind, as well as a large outpouring of extempore prayer, both preceded and followed the operation. To do her justice, Lady Belmore was a good deal shocked to find her own name introduced into these prayers as that of one who was doing much for Christ ; and when, in the address which followed, she was likened, now to the woman of Shunem, now to Dorcas, now to Lois, now to Eunice, her sense of the fitness of things, which was as yet unextinguished, revolted against the abuse. But there is a charm in religious deference, an unction in pious praise, before which all appeals to mere carnal vanity pale and grow dim.

Lady Belmore, startled, perhaps shocked at first, by the terms in which the preacher spoke of her, came to believe, before the

ceremonial was over, that it was the power of indwelling sin which caused her to put a wrong construction on the sayings and doings of the godly man ; and went away, after the concluding hymn, satisfied that she had done a great work, and that generations yet unborn would profit by it and bless her.

The building of the new Bethel went on apace. Lord Belmore gave, besides his donation in money, all the stone, lime, and timber necessary for the work, and the little that was needed over and above her ladyship supplied out of her own private purse. So sustained, the carpenters and bricklayers worked with a will, and the edifice was soon roofed in. It was crowded on the opening day—her ladyship occupying a pew set apart expressly for her use. Mr Jabez Growler, who preached the opening sermon, outdid himself. If he had been fervent before, he was furious now—diving with undaunted courage into the deepest mysteries ; and by his fierce description—not of heaven, but of the other place—working up

his uneducated hearers into frenzy. More than one man—very many women, and even children—fell into convulsions. Shrieks, cries, blasphemies of the wildest kind rang through the building, which became, through the stirring eloquence of the preacher, more like a mad-house than a place of worship.

From that day dissent, in its rudest and most irrational form, became the fashion in Baddlesmere. Not a few of the tenantry, with a large majority of the working people, turned their backs upon the parish church altogether, and became, with her ladyship, constant frequenters of the Bethel. A revival, in short, had come about. The Spirit poured itself forth again, as it had done in the days of Wesley and Whitfield, and men's assurance of final acceptance was counted upon in proportion to the enormity and frequency of the sins of which they had in other days been guilty. As to the Vicar and his family, they were dumfounded by what they saw and heard. None of them, indeed, intermitted their visits of

kindness to their poor neighbours ; none of them—the Vicar least of all—uttered one word of complaint, either in his sermons or elsewhere. But towards them the hearts of the people were changed. Bare civility—sometimes not even that—was all they received in exchange for their kindly greetings. There was a complete moral revolution in the place. Lady Belmore, like others, learned to think and even to speak of herself as a chosen vessel ; and certainly, if she had thought otherwise, it would have been through no lack of assurance to the contrary by the “new light” minister and his colleagues. They did not suffer her to hide her candle under a bushel. They did not keep back from her words of praise. And these, day by day, she paid back by contributing more and more to the worldly comforts of her ghostly advisers. The chapel being fully equipped, a snug little house was built for Mr Growler at her ladyship’s expense. Suitable furniture came in to it by degrees—carpets to-day, tables to-morrow, beds and bedding next



day—not to speak of supplies of every kind—beef, mutton, poultry, bread, beer, and so forth. For each of these the good pastor assured his congregation that, as the want became pressing, he prayed, and his prayers were answered without fail. There was, indeed, a complete moral revolution in the place, of which her ladyship could not but regard herself, as she was regarded by others, to be the prime mover. And it was in full swing on the morning of that particular Sunday in July of which, and of its accompaniments, we said something at the opening of this chapter.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### BEDLAM.

THE church-bells had rung out their peal of six, and the knell was tolling, but it tolled to little purpose. One or two only of the families of the more respectable tenants, especially of those who had been for generations on the land, obeyed the call, and scattered themselves here and there in the body of the church. Their presence sufficed but to make the vacuum tangible. Almost all the rest of the parishioners, including the servants from the Hall—the gardeners, the grooms, and retainers generally—streamed down towards the Bethel, and crossed its threshold in shoals. My lady, dressed with exceeding plainness, having Mrs Jones on one hand, and her maid, Louise,

on the other, bent her steps in the same direction. She, too, entered and sat down, as usual, in her pew, well-cushioned, and lined with superfine crimson cloth, just under the pulpit. Mr Growler, who appeared to have waited her ladyship's arrival, immediately mounted the pulpit-stairs. He wore no distinguishing robe ; that would have brought him down to the level of poor humanity. A suit of black with a white tie (why should a black coat and white neckcloth be esteemed sacred things ?) alone marked him out as set apart from his kind ; and before him lay an open Bible, of quarto size, with a book of hymns—chiefly adapted by Wesley and Watts. He gave out the hymn ; he began to read ; and had just compassed the first line of the second verse, when the chapel door swung violently open, and up the aisle—if aisle it may be called, which was only a narrow passage interposed between two rows of benches—stalked a form on which all eyes were instantly turned. A tall man, more than half-naked ; his black clothes torn to ribbons, besmeared with mud, bare-headed,

and with matted hair, made straight, with stern and measured strides, towards the pulpit. He cried aloud as he advanced, "Woe to the false prophets that prophesy deceit, that call sweet bitter and bitter sweet. There is a lying spirit in them; yea, even the same that went out from the presence of the Lord, and entered into the prophets of the king of Israel. Behold, I will cast them out, saith the Lord; yea, I, even I, will call down fire from heaven upon them, and consume them as in a moment."

He had reached by this time within a few feet of the pulpit-stair, looking fiercely all the while at poor Jabez, whose pale cheeks grew more deadly pale every moment—his tongue, as he afterwards expressed it, cleaving to the roof of his mouth. Upon the entire congregation a magic spell seemed to have fallen, for nobody moved to stop or interrogate the intruder. Another instant, and assuming his purpose to be hostile, escape for Jabez Growler would have been impossible. But that worthy, putting the worst construction on what he saw, and believ-

ing his own life in danger, flung the hymn-book from him and dashed down the pulpit-stairs. A half-naked arm was stretched out to grasp him, but missed its clutch. Happily for him the vestry door stood ajar. He dashed through, and, guided more by instinct than by reasoning, slammed it back and turned the key. It was perhaps well for him that he retained presence enough of mind to do so ; for scarcely was the bolt shot when a violent effort was made to force the lock. Jabez did not wait to contemplate the issues of that endeavour. Another door let him out upon the common. He passed through that also, and at the top of his speed fled, he did not care where.

Meanwhile the stranger, still unopposed, still stared at in mute amazement, ascended to the place whence Growler had come down. To say that the people were panic-stricken would convey but a very imperfect idea of the state into which they had fallen. Paralysis of speech and limb appeared to have come upon them. They neither stirred nor spoke, but stood and listened,

as the wedding guest is described as listening to the Ancient Mariner, when

“He held him with his glittering eye,  
And the Mariner had his will.”

“He is cast down ; he is driven forth into the wilderness. He spake not true things. He executed not judgment, nor righteousness, nor truth. He received not the message, neither did he deliver it ; but I have received it, and I will deliver it. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariot shall be as a whirlwind ; his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us, for we are spoiled ! For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now ! for my soul is wearied because of murderers.”

Thus far the wretched man went on uninterrupted in his wild declamation, till suddenly, from the body of the chapel, arose a bitter cry, and an elderly woman, breaking loose from those about her who would have kept her quiet,

sprang out into the passage. "My lady," she screamed, as she ran towards Lady Belmore's pew, "don't you know him? Don't you see that it is my son—my darling—the pride of his mother's heart—your ladyship's friend, as you've often made me glad by calling him! Oh, what a sight to look upon! Come down, James—my darling James! Come to your mother, and she will be as thy mother again, clothing you, feeding you, nursing you!"

The spell was broken. The people recovered their senses in one direction only to lose them in another. There was a simultaneous rush towards the pulpit, not without stern words escaping from many mouths; and it might have gone hard with the intruder, notwithstanding the general conviction that he was insane, had not Lady Belmore interfered. To his mother's appeal poor Thompson paid no attention, and contented himself with looking coldly upon her, and saying, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come!" But when Lady Belmore, pushing back the crowd with a wave of

her hand, called him by his name, he calmed down in a moment, he descended from the pulpit on hearing her request him to do so, and suffered his mother to lead him away, unresistingly, as if he were a child.

There was an end for that day to public worship in the Bethel at Baddlesmere. The congregation soon dispersed, and finding that their pastor did not return, betook themselves to their several homes, agitated and angry. As to Mr Jabez Growler, though sought for a good hour, no trace could be discovered of him. It afterwards appeared that, instead of sheltering in his own house, he had continued his flight far beyond the bounds of the parish, and carried dismay into the house of a brother preacher many miles distant from it, by rushing into his parlour, travel-stained and bare-headed, just as the family were sitting down to tea. With the account which he gave of the strange adventure of the morning, we are as little concerned as with the impression which his history made upon the minds of those who heard it. But, what-



ever these might be, it is certain that Mr Growler could not, for several days, be persuaded to go back to his manse and his charge. We are a remarkable people, we Englishmen, whatever may be our position in the social scale. We lavish our respect and esteem upon a favourite to-day, without being able to assign any good cause for doing so, and we take them away from him to-morrow on grounds just as reasonable. Mr Jabez Growler never recovered the shock which an entire want of self-control inflicted on the reverence of his flock. The preacher of faith was manifestly devoid of faith. He could not, perhaps, be expected to remove a mountain, but they who sat at his feet did believe, till convinced of the contrary, that no bodily terror could be strong enough to drive him from his Master's service. They looked to him to control that strange man with a word, or even a look ; instead of which he was the first to flee from him. Mr Growler never after that regained his influence in Baddlesmere, and by little and little the Bethel, which had been founded amid so

much hope, and reared with such ample promise, ceased to be the great centre of attraction.

Meanwhile Mr Thompson, led away by his mother, was persuaded to undress, to be made clean, and put to bed in her cottage on the farther skirt of the common. The power over him of Lady Belmore—of her expressed wish—of her very name—seemed to be marvellous, and her ladyship perhaps understood the reason why, though nobody else, it may be, even guessed at it. And now, in the hour of the poor man's utter humiliation, she did not scruple to exercise it for his benefit. She walked with him and with his mother to their house. She spoke soothingly and kindly to him, and when he knelt before her, as he did more than once ere they reached their destination, she uttered no reproof, but contented herself with bidding him get up. She came to see him, also, the following day, and found that, though sleepless still, as he had been through the night, he had never once offered to get out of bed, she having required him to lie still. She sat beside him, too, at his

earnest desire. How he wandered in his speech! What strange, wild, horrible things he said! Yet he was calm and even joyous in saying them. He had never forgotten his duty. She had always been in his thoughts. She was his virgin-mother. She was "Mary, the sister of Lazarus, whom he loved." Judas had gone to his reward. This time water had done what the cord formerly did. He would never trouble her more. He would offer her no more insults. He was going by-and-by to seek Obadiah, and ask his aid to bring down fire on Jezebel and consume her. Ahab, too, must die, but not yet; and then the same chariot of fire would take them up together on the wings of the whirlwind.

"I have long dreaded this, Mrs Thompson," Lady Belmore said to his mother, after the interview came to an end. "Indeed, both Mr George and Mr Charles hinted to me your son's state repeatedly in their letters. It is a great misfortune, but you must bear with it. Your

son is not fit to be at large. He can never be cured at home. We must get him removed to a place where his particular malady is specially cared for. Poor fellow! I am very sorry for him, and still more sorry for you."

What could Mrs Thompson say? It was evident that her son was not in his right senses. It was equally clear that she had no means of rightly attending to him at home. She wept bitterly, but offered no objection to his removal. There was much less of ceremony and parade fifty years ago than there is now in shutting up the insane, or persons alleged to be insane. Lord Belmore had but to communicate with the governors of one of the few public asylums then in existence, and the thing was done. One morning early there drove up to Mrs Thompson's door a post-chaise, out of which a couple of strong men descended. They entered the patient's room, for he was still in bed. They threw themselves upon him, pressed a strait waistcoat over his shoulders, pulled the cords tight before he could

offer any resistance, and had him in their power. They wrapped him in one of the blankets, and seating him in the chaise between them, drove away. He was never seen again in his native place.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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